Alienation and Consciousness: Towards a Dual-Aspect Approach to Issues of Social Justice

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Abstract

A great portion of people's lives are spent in the workplace. I argue that many Western workplaces are neither sites of democratic practices or equality but are based on modes of exploitation that benefit the few. Consequently, workers experience alienation, a term used by Karl Marx to describe the separation of the worker from their work, from others, and from themselves. This separation manifests in the various mental health issues we see today in all arenas and walks of life, and these issues are being addressed in a variety of helping professions, including education and counselling. In recognizing that our society has not taken up an adequate degree of foundational analysis, this thesis proposes a Marxist analysis of alienation and its impact on citizens' wellbeing. I use the counselling profession as an example at-hand to make the argument as to why the profession must offer critiques of capitalism if it is to properly address social justice issues and to effectively respond to a predominant source of mental distress within our current society. However, helping professions themselves are a product of, and a co-creator of, the capitalist system. Despite their concerns for social justice, I argue that they perpetuate injustice by supporting the status quo and by operating from individualistic, decontextualized, and ahistorical models. The prevalence of world-views that promote a materialistic individualism must be therefore challenged. Hence, it is proposed that consciousness, the original subject matter of psychology itself, must be accounted for within our world-view. An argument is put forth that panpsychism is a promising philosophical position from which to generate new understandings and appreciations for the world and our place in it. A panpsychic dual-aspect monism invites novel ways to consider the ways in which helping professions function at both the micro-level of the individual person, but also, simultaneously, at the macro-level of system change. I call upon Acceptance and Commitment Therapy as a good example of a micro-level approach that can be utilized within many helping professions that centers the experience of consciousness as a vital component to personal and societal change. The implications of addressing individual and systemic change in relation to education, especially within the context of our current climate crisis, are discussed.

Keywords: alienation; capitalism; consciousness and panpsychism; social justice; helping professions; ACT theory

Dedication

To Judy and Lars.

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List of Acronyms

ACT	Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
RFT	Relational Frame Theory

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Prologue

It would be fair to say that if there is one activity that is ubiquitous in our lives in the modern era, it is work. Work can, of course, mean many different things to different people, from unpaid labour in the home, to artistic pursuits, to fulfilling some goal, to working on oneself, or for one's community in some way. Because of increasing and all-consuming work life wherein life and work are closely interlinked, in the present civilization, I am chiefly concerned in this dissertation with the work we perform in our workplaces, work we do for others in return for a wage, and how it impacts us and our relationships, shaping the direction of other endeavors in our lives, with a particular focus on why this domain must be analysed and critiqued by the members of any profession dedicated to helping others, like social work, counselling psychology, community services, and even schooling in K-12 and postsecondary, if they are sincere in their commitment to engage with broader, systemic issues, like social justice, within their practices.

Working for others within some form of workplace (these domains, too, can vary greatly) has been a pervasive focus in our society, with every other aspect of life seeming to flow from it or around it, consciously or unconsciously.[1] As a clinical counsellor I have an intake form with a list of sections that asks questions about work followed by sections on social connections, spirituality, sense of self, relationships, and leisure. The apparent equivalence given to each section on the page makes it appear that these areas of the person's life are equal, with the same time and energy given to each domain. But in reality, this is not so. In actual fact, for most of us, work is the area that is principally privileged, affecting and permeating all the other areas of our lives in oftentimes obvious, but also subtle, ways. It is the primary center of our day, whether we want it to be or not. The practical matters of our day-to-day lives tend to revolve around work, its constraints and demands determining whether or not we can place our time and energies toward other pursuits. Our leisure, relationships, or friendships, for example, may be drastically transformed due to our commitments to our working lives. Many clients I meet within my counselling practice feel that they just do not have time for

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, I conceive of work as paid labour, a relatively recent understanding of what work means in society, and which is generally characterized as non-domestic, legally codified, institutionalized and socially safeguarded employment (Komlosy, 2018). Of all the varieties of work I have performed this is the one in which I have spent the most time. I dare say this is true for most people in our society.

friends, or a spiritual practice, or even connecting with their family the way they might wish to, after a long day at work and, as a sad consequence, these aspects of their lives disappear from view. As a result, people lose parts of themselves, and there is a kind of grieving around this which can percolate in the background of their lives. Sometimes people come to counselling to investigate this deep feeling. They wonder who they have become, or how their relationship reached the point that it has, or why they are so anxious, or bored, or dissatisfied in their lives. Still, work does not and cannot cease if we are to live in 21st century society. Despite insight into the impact our working lives have on the rest of our lives, we cannot stop working because we need to eat and pay the mortgage or rent, at the very least. Activities or interests in which one might have taken joy may, as the months and years pass by, be slowly abandoned, but yet work must continue. Other activities can go, but work cannot.

I know this well myself. I worked for 30 years in a corporate government job, five days a week, eight hours a day. Yet, this narrative description in temporal terms does not really give a complete view of the way in which work permeated all areas of my life and, in extension, my partner's life, shaping and forming the life we shared throughout the years. Despite working for eight hours I still needed to commute for an hour and a half morning and evening, and in addition to getting ready in the morning and perhaps going to an Aikido class in the evening, I found there was really never any time for much else. The working day for most people does not merely involve the eight hours spent at the workplace but all the other hours that are intrinsically connected to work. It is no wonder, then, that many people lose contact with friends, are unable to form new relationships, squabble with their partners over all sorts of issues related or not to money and time spent with each other, fail to exercise or get a good night's sleep, skip the half hour meditation practice they had promised themselves every evening, and so on. The experience of our working lives not only affects the things we do, but also the things we do not do, with the latter often causing the most trouble for us personally and socially.

I have always been fascinated by the messages we receive throughout our lives regarding the necessity and importance of work, and of being a good worker. For we are indoctrinated (as good a word as any) by the adults around us from a very early age that if we want to 'get anywhere' in life we will need to do two things: conform, and work hard. As adults, especially after a lifetime of engaging in work for others, it seems easy to see, if we are honest, how patently false these affirmations are. There are plenty of people,

most people probably, who have worked hard all their lives and ‘get no-where’, wherever that place was supposed to be in the first place, and despite their compliance never experience the kind and quality of life they had been promised through a lifetime of work. Still, this is the message of parents and educators, explicitly or implicitly, and it is dutifully followed (though sometimes wonderfully opposed) throughout our lives. Whether we work hard or not though, we must work, and all the forces of socialization and education converge to produce in us a good worker, which is to say, a productive member of society. In return we are rewarded with free time, perhaps a few hours in the evening and the weekends, but as Rosenthal (2016) points out, in reality “there is nothing free about it, because workers’ lives are dominated by the demands of capitalism: to prepare ourselves to work, to commute to and from work, to recover from the workday, and to raise the next generation of workers” (Chapter 1, para. 5). Even our vacations can be overshadowed by the dread of returning to work, with our work piling up, ominously awaiting us. The relaxation of a nice vacation can easily dissipate within five minutes of returning to our workplaces.

Perhaps this account may sound like a demonization of work itself, but it is not. It is really the beginning of a critique of the ways in which we have been recruited to serve the interests of others within our workplaces, spending most of our lives in this pursuit, and having no real voice in how we work, or in the results to which our efforts at work are put. In other words, it is a critique of the ways in which our societies currently organize production, a critique of capitalism (Roberts, 2015). We may define capitalism as “a social system based on private ownership of the means of production and wage labor. It relies on multiple markets: markets for goods and services, the labor market, and the capital market” (Sunkara, 2019, pp. 21-22). Often our interests do in fact intersect with the interests of an employer but for the most part they do not, and despite the often sophisticated attempts to convince the employee to the contrary (i.e. wellness programs, team spirit, overtime, bonuses, etc.), employees are merely assets used to generate profits for others. Work itself, though, is (or, can be under the right circumstances) an area of life that should express a person’s creativity, possibility, intentionality, connection and service to others, and a curiosity about the world and what is in it. It should bring meaning, purpose, and a sense of value. Work is a natural expression of the human self, an engagement with nature to produce sustenance, culture, art, religion, science, and all things spiritual. Work is a means to creating

communion, rich and rewarding relationships with oneself, others, and the natural world. It touches all levels of one's being and, because at its best it invites both attention and intentionality, both attributes of consciousness, it can be an entryway into Being itself.

Toward the end of my 30 years as a corporate employee I started to consider new options for my own working life. I wanted to do something that would help others and be of service to them. And I wanted to work for myself. I had always been interested in psychology and so I entered a counselling psychology program and obtained a Master's degree. I immediately went to work, opening up my own private practice, while continuing to work for Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Community Services where I had done my internship. At the same time, and for the last few years before I took early retirement, I also continued to work for the government. The contrast between the two jobs was palpable. With counselling I was immediately engaged with work that was meaningful and purposeful and which interested me deeply. The counselling community was supportive and caring. I also enjoyed working for myself and relished the idea of not being anyone else's employee. There was a great feeling of liberation in this.

However, although the practice of counselling psychology was for me an emancipatory personal experience on multiple levels, it soon became clear to me that historically and in practice it is not without its concerns. Despite an historically obvious engagement with contextual and socio-economic issues when addressing mental distress, it quickly became apparent that counselling is nevertheless itself deeply rooted in capitalist practices. The models it tends to adopt, although there are exceptions, are generally individualistic and ahistorical in character with the effect that its approaches and methods often perpetuate the very systems and inequalities it professes to oppose, while ignoring the alienation experienced by working people within modern workplaces. I will explore this claim further in the first three chapters of this dissertation, showing how it is revealed in the practices of counselling, and why alienation from work, a prominent attribute of today's work experience, is ignored as a site for mental health complaints. Interestingly, I found that there is not a lot written in the counselling psychology literature (with only a few notable exceptions outside the field) that addresses these issues; nor are there many outright critiques, aside from passing acknowledgements, of the way capitalist modes of production manifest in alienating the lives of working people, surely an otherwise obvious site for an analysis of the causes and maintenance of mental health issues, and other concerns, and especially since capitalism's functioning through

markets and private ownership is not restricted to workplaces but permeates all of society's social, economic, demographic, cultural, and ideological relationships (Mason, 2015).

Reflecting on counselling profession's own complicity in the system of oppression that creates alienation, as above, opened for me the door to the larger view that showed me how pervasive alienation is throughout all aspects of human lives. For, capitalism is a ruling ideology that shapes and governs every aspect of social design and arrangement, from birth to burial. Schooling and other educational institutions and helping professions are not excluded from the rule of capitalism.

Purposes and explorations

The purpose of this dissertation is, in part, to bring to the forefront the centrality of exploitation and injustice in the places where people spend most of their waking hours, the workplace for adults and schools for students. In this dissertation my site-specific focus is the workplace, the primary structural site for the activity of capital; however, all the analysis generated at this site generally applies to other areas of social organization. In the workplace, alienation is created and maintained and it is the felt experience of alienation which I propose is a root cause of mental health issues within today's society. I also argue that the helping professions, despite their general acknowledgement of the necessity to address social justice issues in people's lives, are by and large ill-equipped to deal with alienation and its effects because they have not developed a sufficient critique in their literature of the real structural inequalities they often name as problematic to people; that is, they do not name capitalism itself, with its unequal and undemocratic divisions of labour, with its concurrent furtherance of division manifesting in racism, sexism, classism, and so on, as the systemic problem that it is. Attempting to address the expressions of alienation without confronting the systems which foster them really only serves the short-term material interests of various helpers; in the case of counselling psychology, for instance, it is doubtful that temporarily 'fixing' people up to expeditiously return them to their workplaces does anything to prevent or truly resolve the pervasive struggles found in the lives of people. In this dissertation I will use counselling psychology to illustrate examples of this failure within helping professions as a whole, primarily because it is the field with which I am most familiar.

Another major argument within this dissertation is that our modern conception of what constitutes reality, usually imagined as an unqualified materialism, is coetaneous with capitalist enterprise and itself fosters the experience of subjective alienation. Alienation cultivates dualistic splits not only in the relations of production within workplaces, with similar intersectional divisions permeating multiple areas of the social and environmental spheres, but it also actualizes a dualistic isolation of the separate conscious self from the dead, unconscious other, the world. Materialist notions of a confined and exclusive consciousness interacting within an unconscious world suits capitalist interests as it makes commodification far more efficient and justifiable, encouraging utilitarian relationships that are competitive and systematized, but which are ultimately alienated and unfulfilling. It seems to me that capitalism, along with the alienation it produces, is intimately related to a materialism that developed from the 17th century onward which consigned consciousness to human beings principally, and even then only to certain regions of their being (that is, to brains). It was within the crucible of these capitalist and materialist contexts, supported by Protestant religious requirements to work long and hard for one's reward, that modern helping practices developed. Yet, is materialism justified in consigning consciousness only to complex structures like brains? Is it right to think of the world outside these structures as mere dead matter, and so unconscious? Could new paradigms of the place of consciousness in the world transform our current, almost mesmerized, dependency on our current capitalist systems? The latter part of this dissertation explores my belief that there needs to be a new understanding of the central place of consciousness in our world paradigm so that we see the world anew as an alive, vital, and, indeed, conscious entity in its own right. I argue for a monistic panpsychic paradigm that recognizes the permeation of consciousness throughout the material world, which is enlivened, and enchanted, thereby. Such a worldview, focusing on the subjectivity and experientiality of phenomena, tackles capitalism from the other end, as it were, because it challenges the dualism that capitalism thrives on, exposing its practices as unjust, unequal, and undemocratic. It is within an understanding of a living world that the basis for an ethic of justice and compassionate care can emerge, and that, in particular, would serve as the foundation for the helping professions which have been heretofore functioning from an individualist and competitive perspective, mirroring the capitalist economic and social systems they evolved alongside.

Some comments on my approach and assumptions

I should make some comments regarding my philosophical approach throughout this work, and some of my assumptions. As indicated above, my approach may be considered as having two aspects, a view from the outside and a view from within, both necessary for an effective engagement of any helping profession with more trans-personal issues like social justice. Here I define helping professions as "occupations that provide health and education services to individuals and groups, including occupations in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, counseling, medicine, nursing, social work, physical and occupational therapy, teaching, and education" (APA Dictionary of Psychology).

First, I am not shy to name capitalism as the social and economic system against which we, as participants within helping professions, whether they are as counsellors, educators, doctors, or social workers, must oppose. This naming of capitalism as problematic has gained some traction in recent years, particularly after the crash of 2008 and the development of movements like Occupy and, as demonstrated in the United States, in the political runs of people like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and in the United Kingdom, Jeremy Corbyn. Many writers, authors, academics, and politicians are making the case for the introduction of new forms of society based on truly democratic principles, justice, and equality, and are identifying capitalism as the main impediment to realizing these goals.[2] I have myself been inspired by democratic socialists of the past who fought for trade unions, free medical care, free university access, voting rights, regulations around working hours, and so on. Moreover, more and more analyses recognize the role of intersectionality in the development of, and solution to, issues of racism, sexism, climate change, economic, political, and social injustices of all kinds, since it is clear that they are mutually interdependent. We now know that, for example, fossil fuel companies were aware for decades that their products were causing,[3] and would continue to cause, massive changes in the environment, and yet they chose to cover these facts up, anticipating that acknowledgement of them would

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[2] John Nichols (2011) has written an excellent history of socialism in America, most of which is quite unknown to North Americans.

[3] See: http://climateaccountability.org/ and the report from the Guardian news-site: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/09/revealed-20-firms-third-carbon-emissions

impact profits. This was countenanced and supported by governments and politicians.[4] The adverse effects of these practices are multiple and diffuse, touching almost every level of the political, economic, social, and environmental spheres. Clearly, these business methods are fundamentally undemocratic and destructive, and they must be challenged, but this challenge must come in the form of an exposition of capitalism itself which operates on the basis of exploiting resources, both human and non-human, for the benefit of a few (Foster & Clark, 2018). Ultimately, workplace arrangements need to become democratized so that employees have a full voice in workplace functioning, which will result in practices that benefit workers, their communities, and the environment (Wolf, 2012).

I use Karl Marx's concept of alienation to assist in developing an understanding of the ways capitalist workplaces engender mental health issues in particular, and as a concept with which helping professions like counselling must engage. Marx wrote about alienation mostly in his early writings when he was reflecting on the price that brutal capitalist practices of his time were having on the society around him. His descriptions of alienation are an astute summary of the psychological, emotional, and physical toll that work had on the people toiling in industrialized workplaces. Although times have changed, at least in Western countries, I would argue that the workplaces of today continue to foster alienation, although the forms it takes may differ from the form it took in the 1800s. The psychological experience of alienation still manifests in the various ways that workers feel disconnected from their work and from each other (Mandel, 2015). Marx recognized that capitalist modes of production created divisions of labour and class formation, establishing massive inequalities in society. These inequalities have continued and have been well-documented in recent years, clearly demonstrating that, while there are a few individuals doing very well within the current system, for too many individuals life has become quite a struggle. The inequality created by capitalism itself produces mental health issues.

Second, I advocate in this dissertation that there must be a dual transformation to remedy our current situation, involving both an outward systemic change as outlined above and also what might be called an internal change within individuals and societies, and that helping professions must engage with both aspects within their practices. As an

[4] A recent example of this type of collusion is the Liberal government's purchase of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project. See: https://thenarwhal.ca/kinder-morgan-s-canadian-executives-earn-millions-governments-discuss-bailout

example of what I am advocating, I consider how my argument for engaging with both aspects within its practices would play out in counselling, my current field of service. I argue for the adoption of a dual-aspect monistic panpsychism as a philosophical means to not only ground this approach in theory, but also to invite possibilities for living out the ramifications of this world-view within both individual lives and society. I believe it is important to problematize consciousness itself and its place in the natural world in order to revolutionize the way we understand and live our lives. As mentioned before, a recognition, both intellectual and experiential, that the world itself is conscious, and therefore alive, invites an ethic of compassion, care, and justice. This inner understanding necessarily accompanies outward changes to social practices. These topics might seem oddly incompatible with one another, and I often thought, while considering the matter, that they were really two radically different areas of concern. Yet, surely the subject of consciousness, the very channel of experience itself, is, or should be, a primary theme for any psychologically or interpersonally oriented helping practice, along with the way in which the phenomenology of consciousness plays out in the arrangements of society. Indeed, what if these two areas, the inner and the outer, turn out to be the same thing? What if the focus on one is the focus on the other at the same time? What if the world-view that matter is inherently conscious demands a society that is caring and just? If so, all helping professions, of which counselling is my specific example in this thesis, will need to address themselves to not only the workplace, the primary source of capitalist alienation, but also their own individualistic and decontextualized practices, pedagogy, models, and assumptions if they are to effectively engage with mental distress permeating these fields.

Some considerations…

I recognize that in describing the nature of work, especially when connecting it to history and the exercise of power through specific social relations, there can be a danger of simplifying something that is actually quite complex and multifaceted. As Komlosy (2018) points out in her extensive review of the history and meaning of work, linear historical descriptions, especially focused on European examples used as a universal model and comparison to other areas of the world, tend to hide “the diversity of actually coexisting alternatives, countertendencies, labour relations and discourses at each historical juncture, obscuring some aspects entirely” (Chapter 1, Limits Eurocentric Narrative, para. 3). Nevertheless, despite alternatives always existing to the dominant

practices during any historical epoch, it is important to name what they were alternatives to, resisting the temptation to avoid descriptions of actual historical conditions in the name of a post-modern and post-structuralist relativism (Cole, 2003; Cole & Hill, 1995; Parker, 1998). My assumption is that we currently live within a capitalist society, fuelled by neoliberal philosophies, but I am aware that there are always lines of divergence from these perspectives, operating sometimes simultaneously to them, and within them. I certainly experienced counter-narratives within my old workplace which took the form of a variety of practices intended to invoke other ways of working including non-conformity to norms, the use of humour to oppose technocratic procedures, non-performance of requirements, 'forgetting' to do unnecessary tasks, and going on strike, among others. Yet, all these practices were situated clearly and unambiguously within and against a capitalist business structure, and thus it is within capitalism that I ground my critique.

Turning to the subject matter of consciousness and my consideration of its role within the material conditions of reality and social relations, I advocate in this dissertation for a panpsychic world-view, keeping in mind the vast varieties and histories of the idea. Although panpsychism can be seen to invite other paradigms for consideration, like, for example, pantheism or panentheism, I have tried to avoid veering too much off-course in this regard. Personally, I am inclined toward a species of panentheism, but I think it is sufficient to merely introduce the notion of the inseparability of mind and matter at all levels, which is the primary feature of the panpsychic view of the world presented here. Moreover, I have relied on Western analytic philosophers to advocate for this position, while acknowledging that there are certainly other traditions (like many continental philosophers, the new materialists, and most of the Eastern traditions) that give various forms of accounts of it. I confess that, despite my familiarity with many of the Eastern traditions and practices in the formative phases of my life, I have, for the most part, exclusively focused on particular Western analytic philosophical arguments simply because in my current phase of intellectual pursuits they interest me. Part of my interest and excitement is seeing a renewed interest in consciousness within these traditions in recent years.

Finally, my arguments should not be taken as any particular explication of Marxism. Marx himself famously said that he was not a Marxist, and whereas I conform to some orthodoxy around the notion of alienation itself, and of the relevance of recognizing class division as sources of mental distress, I am not a Marxist dogmatist.

Marx's main contribution was a critique of capitalism, a critique that has enjoyed a revival and quite correctly been given more credence in recent years. I am happy to join those who believe Marx was right in his analysis of capitalism and its effects. Nevertheless, the re-recognition of consciousness per se as an important area of study, and not merely an epi-phenomena caused by complex neurology or the totality of social relationships, along with the additionally controversial assertion of its inherent inseparability from all matter, would probably be dismissed as bourgeois philosophizing by Marx who held a strictly materialist view of the world, and who early on rejected similar Hegelian views of the nature of reality. I think, however, that materialist views of matter, especially with the arrival of the new physics, are inadequate to explain what we take to be real and that, along with Thomas Nagel, Galen Strawson, and others, any good explanation of physicalism, which seems like a good enough starting point as any other, must entail alternative explanations of the datum of consciousness. The final part of this Prologue describes how chapters are arranged to make my arguments.

In **Chapter One** I discuss the idea of alienation and why it is particularly relevant for the mental health issues that are increasingly recognized as central to the practices of the helping professions. It begins with some historical context to the idea, Marx's critique of some of the older versions of it, and its connection with labour and with industrialized and modern workplaces. Marx's understanding of the effects of alienation on people's lives is outlined. One of his unique insights was commodity fetishism and how this phenomenon replaces real relational connections within society. I then discuss the work of others who have attempted to expand on the more sociological and psychological effects of alienation, grounding it in analyses especially pertinent to the helping professions. I concentrate mostly on the work of Melvin Seeman for this discussion. This chapter will give examples throughout of the diverse ways in which alienation affects people individually and also relationally, linking it explicitly to the reproduction of mental distress in various forms.

In **Chapter Two** I focus on counselling psychology, its history, and its historical approach to the mental health field as a specific example of how one particular helping profession has engaged with wider, contextual social issues in its attempt to assist people seeking help. I discuss its efforts to address social justice within its practices and pedagogy, and its forceful critique of structural discrimination. I go on to review its advocacy of multiculturalism as the primary representation of its embrace of social

justice concerns. I then explore some of the more recent attempts to broaden the notion of social justice as it applies to counselling psychology, but I suggest that current conceptions are, nevertheless, not explicitly grounded in any solid philosophical foundation for their critiques, as they necessarily should be. Finally, I propose that alienation theory, based on an exploration of capitalism, class division, and the inequality these generate, offers a philosophical basis for an analysis and critique of society that is well-suited to counselling psychology's interest in engaging with broader conceptions of social justice within its practices.

In **Chapter Three** I discuss specifically why counselling psychology has failed to provide a strong philosophical foundation for a social justice perspective since, in actuality, it is embedded within modern neoliberal assumptions and is itself historically and practicably a functioning arm of capitalism. It unwittingly empowers the very conditions that the profession purports to challenge. I will review a number of ways in which this is borne out. Many of the helping disciplines, including psychology, co-evolved with the growth of capitalism, simultaneously flourishing within the contextual crucible of an emerging materialism, which relegated consciousness/soul/spirit to small parts of the human brain, while rejecting the ancient understanding that the universe was alive, thus reducing it to dead mechanistic matter. I discuss how this led to an individualism that encouraged competition rather than co-operation, and to political systems like capitalism that sustained such understandings. Psychology, in particular, developed individualistic models and practices which reflected the new political and ideological world-view. I will look at the construction and use of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* as an example of the ways in which the 'psych' helping professions perpetuate the commodification of persons and their distress for the financial benefit of their practitioners.

In **Chapter Four** I discuss the proper subject matter of any relational helping practice, mind or consciousness, and will advocate for understanding consciousness in a new (though, actually quite old) way, that is, through panpsychism. I say 'proper' because helping professions using psychology (which is most of them these days) have been highjacked by ideological concerns to predict and control behaviour within the narrow parameters of capitalist expectations of the good worker and consumer. However, psychology is predominantly the study of subjectivity, and I will argue that subjectivity is shared, in some form, by all reality. Consequently, a relational inter-subjectivity, not just between humans but between all subjectivities, invites the

emergence of ethics of care, compassion, justice, and democracy. I use arguments from contemporary Western analytic philosophy to make the case for the adoption of a different, though ancient, understanding of matter's relationship to mind. I discuss the implications of this view, what might be called a panpsychic dual-aspect monism, for how we could experience and function differently in the world as a result.

In **Chapter Five** I will concern myself with how the helping professions might move beyond their own capitalist foundations and more effectively address systemic social justice issues within their domains of practice. Some of the newer mindfulness-based therapy approaches currently being used by various helping professionals are potentially promising for opening up possibilities for initiating change at multiple levels of experience. I illustrate how counselling at the personal, individual level can effect changes at the broader, systemic level through an explication of the processes found in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT, a therapy approach I practice with my own clients and which is used by a variety of helping professionals. I use Goodman et al.'s (2004) six principles for working within a social justice framework to exemplify how ACT's six main therapeutic processes can function to simultaneously influence both the micro- and macro-levels of change. Ultimately, this involves engaging with a revised understanding of the centrality of consciousness, a recognition of the aliveness of the world in its dual aspect of being both matter and mind, an appreciation of what this means in terms of equality and justice, and a commitment to change at both the level of the self and of the society.

The **Epilogue** concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the place of education as a location for meeting the challenges of the current climate crisis, the potentially catastrophic expression of an essential theme throughout, that human beings' interaction with nature through capitalist work arrangements has created an alienated condition, which results in disconnection with nature, with others, and with ourselves, all leading to health issues on an individual and planetary scale.

This dissertation represents the written expression within an academic framework of much that I have been studying both professionally and personally over many decades. Its emphasis on pursuing both social and individual change at the same time, as it were, comes from not just a conviction that this is the most sensible approach, but also, on the one hand, from a frustration in a politics that ignores the person and

their inner experiences, thus reducing persons to mere social constructions, and on the other hand, psychologies and spiritualities that focus on inner experience to the exclusion of the necessity of social change. I believe that a focus on one without the other is mistaken, and ultimately unproductive. As David Loy (2018) states: “As we begin to wake up and realize that we are not separate from each other, nor from this wondrous earth, we realize that the ways we live together and relate to the earth need to be reconstructed too” (Chapter 2, Selfless Engagement, para. 4). All helping professions and in particular for me because of my professional affiliation, counselling psychology, may well be in an eminent position to encourage and support such changes.

“Alienation is a form of living death. It is the acid of despair that dissolves society”.

Martin Luther King Jr.

“Alienation and loneliness plant the seeds for rebellion and consciousness”.

B. W. Powe

Chapter 1: Alienation

1.1. Chapter Introduction

In this chapter I will explore alienation and its effects, using Karl Marx's (1818-1883) description of the term within the context of political economy as a guide to understanding it, and particularly as encountered in the domain of the workplace. I am especially drawn to the notion of alienation because it seems to me to have been a common experience in the workplaces I knew. The manifestations of it were often varied and complex, but despite being sometimes obscured through habituation or the subtlety of its expression, they were for the most part quite obvious. For example, disengagement was a major issue for the corporate company I worked for, and management always seemed to be 'implementing strategies' to rouse the workers and get them more engaged. Yet, this particular sign of alienation-as-disengagement was not unique to our organization. In a 2013 Gallup study of 142 countries, only 13% of employees were found to be engaged with their work (Crabtree, 2013). The notion of alienation pre-dated Marx, of course, with discussions found historically within various religious, philosophical, and political writings. In this chapter I will give some brief background on the idea of alienation as formulated by G. W. F. Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach in order to provide some framework to Marx's historical materialist formulation of the concept, and to highlight some of the ways Marx disagreed with these two thinkers, but also some important ways in which he drew from them, particularly Hegel. I will then explore Marx's understanding of alienation as connected to labour and why this is vital to the argument that it is within the domain of people's working lives, and the structural inequalities that inhabit such contexts, that many mental health issues in our society are reproduced. In other words, I shall argue that a preponderance of mental health issues arise from the experience of alienation in modern capitalist society and that one may look no further than within capitalist class structures formed and codified within a society's work relationships, and the social and cultural relationships which intersect with them, to locate an obvious source of the experience of mental distress. Many modern workplaces are sites of oppression because they are structured by employers to create barriers on multiple levels to the realization of self-determination and democratic participation for powerless workers. Workers internalize these material conditions as negative views of the self, marked particularly by the sense of being unworthy of more

resources or more involved participation, all to the benefit of those in power (Prilleltensky, 2008). Since alienation manifests in psychological issues within these contexts, they may be viewed as natural and inevitable responses to the conditions of oppression and inequality found there, resulting in escape, avoidance, or self-soothing strategies. These responses are subsequently labelled as disordered or pathological by the expert classes, although for ideological reasons, in accordance with mechanistic conceptions of reality, the conditions under which they arise are minimized or ignored. Consequently, any argument for a focus on social justice as a necessary and essential aspect of the helping professions, like counselling psychology, must problematize and theorize alienation in people's working lives, and its effects. I offer comments toward the conclusion of the chapter regarding the role of the individual in effecting change; very often Marx's thought is presented as a mere social philosophy, rendered such that if there were solely future systemic changes to more democratic forms of living,[5] people would naturally lead fulfilled and unalienated lives (Clarke, 1971). It seems to me that this approach, verging on the sort of utopianism about which Marx was quite ambivalent (Eagleton, 2011), abandons his notion of the dialectic, and ignores the role of individual vision and initiative. I believe conscious intention is vital for change to occur, and I agree with Sayers (2011) that "there is an individual, subjective dimension to alienation and its overcoming. Will and choice are necessary" (p. 8). I propose that these qualities are grounded in consciousness itself, within which will, intention, purpose, and meaning lie, and which must, therefore, be part of any analysis of alienation and, more broadly, of social justice. Consequently, a philosophical materialism that is the basis of a critique of capitalist workplace arrangements requires an account of the place of consciousness within its analysis. This will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation. Helping professions of all kinds are in a unique position to not only critique matters of social inequality found within systemic structures like workplaces as it relates to mental distress, but also engage with the phenomena of consciousness itself, both in a philosophical understanding of its pervasiveness in the world, but also in an experiential sharing of its inter-subjectivity with clients, and indeed, with all things. These philosophical and experiential perspectives create and maintain an ethic of equality,

[5] My assumption in this dissertation is that democracy should extend to all, and to every area of our lives. Currently, this is not the case, and the workplace is a prime example of an undemocratic social institution. Historically, many thinkers have not favoured a pure democracy. Neither Socrates or Plato endorsed it, and James Madison, one of the U.S.'s Founding Fathers critiqued it, believing that power should always rest with the wealthy whom he considered more responsible and civic-minded (Chomsky, 2017).

justice, and care which are inherent in such an outlook, and which serve as a way forward to construct a good and compassionate society.

1.2. Marx and Alienation: Some Initial Comments

Beginning early on in his writing career, particularly within the pages of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (otherwise known as the 'Paris Manuscripts'), Marx formulated a notably expansive and integral description of alienation and its effects, which some believe represents the core of his entire philosophical approach to political economy (Raekstad, 2015). Although he developed his economic arguments later on in relation to it, even to the extent that the actual term almost disappears from his writing, Marx was unequivocal from the beginning of his career regarding the existence and influence of alienation, and its origins. His understanding of it was comprehensive, which has caused some problems for commentators searching for specific definitions, and for those social scientists wishing to operationalize the term for empirical purposes. Furthermore, and further complicating matters, Marx often described conditions which might normally be described as alienation without explicitly using the term (Schmitt, 1996). This has led some to conclude that he abandoned the concept after 1844; the Marxist scholar Louis Althusser, for example, claims that as Marx and his thought matured he had, by the time he wrote *Capital*, discarded the notion, turning away from his earlier humanism in favour of a purely economic analysis (Sharma, 1979). Moreover, some have argued that the concept is not relevant for today's world, especially in light of changes in the nature of work over the last 100 years and the expansion of globalization (Archibald, 2009; Seeman, 1983).[6]

This chapter will not address these debates as they are peripheral to the main argument, except to state that it is my own view that Marx was intensely concerned with alienation throughout his career (Allen & Boyle, 2011; Mandel, 1973; Meszaros, 1970; Musto, 2010; Ollman,1977; Sayers, 2011; Sharma, 1979; Silva, 2017) and that, accordingly, it is reasonable to draw on Marx's full oeuvre to explore his understanding

[6] Indeed, since Marx's concept of alienation is very much connected to the level of control that a worker has in their workplace, it is clear that expectation of control, autonomy, and gratification may be lower in developing countries, for example, and, in fact, may be threatening to such workers. Thus, workers in developing countries may be alienated not because of lack of control but because of unrealistic expectations around what work will provide for them materially. Consequently, 'alienation' in developing countries resembles a more Durkheimian 'anomie' than a Marxian alienation. It could also be the case that even although powerlessness is experienced in the same way in different regions or cultures, the manifestations of alienation differ in expression (Archibald, 2009).

of the concept. Furthermore, despite globalization and the increase in technology in the hands of workers, it is “not that objective alienation has now ‘migrated’ from factory to office workers, but, with Marx, that office workers are sinking to the extremely alienated position of factory workers” (Archibald, 2009, p. 154). Moreover, work in information, technological, or knowledge-based occupations has intensified, with increasing demands for productivity, leading to work hours that in many cases well exceed the classic 40-hour week, thus increasing alienation rather than reducing it.

There are also those who are happy to accept the fact of alienation as a kind of vague ontological category, but who display a reticence to explore the individual manifestations of it and its experiential effects in the real lives of people. This appears to be primarily due to disagreements over what Marx thought about human nature, its relation to what he calls ‘species-being’, and what significance, if any, these concepts might demonstrably have to the conditions of alienation itself. Accordingly, Ollman (1977) complains that theorists often render Marx’s concept of human nature invisible, or, when it is acknowledged, fail to position it alongside Marx’s other theories. Thus, for example, Schmitt (1996) says that despite Marx’s elucidation of the conditions that foster alienation “he is less steadfast in his view that the basic condition that causes those manifestations should be described as some problem with each person's human essence” (p. 164). Despite these scholarly concerns which touch more broadly on the perennial question of what constitutes a human being, I am content at this point to mention that Marx, uninterested as he was in abstract philosophical debates (Eagleton, 2018), was in practice quite loquacious in his descriptions of what we today might call the psychological effects of alienation on people, with especially colourful descriptions in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. These effects, and the ways people use to manage them, illustrate the intersectionality of alienation and mental health issues under capitalist modes of production, and, therefore, are especially relevant to the call for competent and clearly defined understandings that social justice might be theorized within the helping professions, and specifically within practices like counselling psychology. Indeed, the beauty of Marx’s analysis, one which is quite integral and intensely interested in nature at all levels, is that it allows for an account of

alienation and a description of its effects at every level of the human experience from the social to the intra-psychic.[7]

Although there has been a decline in scholarly interest in alienation in recent decades, it may be argued that alienation is now actually more prevalent than ever before in today's Western capitalist society (Seeman, 1983; Woodford, 2017; Yuill, 2011) and that the helping professions are particularly well-positioned to address it, both in research and in practice. Indeed, the helping encounter itself is a unique opportunity to not only give persons voice to their experiences of alienation, but to contrastively offer within the helping relationship an alternate way of being with others since it represents a genuinely human interaction as opposed to the commodified relational interactions otherwise found within conventional capitalist life. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five of this dissertation. Regardless, while the effects of alienation in people's lives are often not labelled as such (Seeman, 1983), further complicated by an historic hesitation by many Marxist theorists to consider the usefulness of empirical research into the subject, I agree with Archibald (2009) that Marx was a lifelong proponent of empirical research into both the existence, and psychological effects of, alienation within workers' lived experience.

1.3. What is Alienation?

What is alienation, exactly? We might define it as "a state or a process whereby one becomes separated or estranged from one's original condition, hopefully as a prelude to a subsequent return or recovery of it" (Burston, 1988, p. 84). I intend to explicate what might be meant by original condition in Chapter Four, but for me this phrase speaks to any movement away from an experience of oneself as what one might call undifferentiated consciousness, a pure subjectivity that is fundamentally intrinsic to oneself and others, including nature herself, by which one is connected to all things and through which moral and ethical prerogatives, like equality and justice, are seen to shine. Comparable to the perspectives of Emile Durkheim (who coined the term *anomie*, similar in general intent but not quite the same as alienation), George Simmel, and Max Weber, Marx's notion of alienation is descriptive of a situationally experienced loss of self or relationship that deeply distorts individual and relational experience, and which,

[7] For an excellent, though controversial, explication of this type of holism found in Marx, see Ollman (1977) who refers to this as internal relations.

particularly important for Marx, is grounded within a person's larger social and historical contexts (Yuill, 2011).

Historically, however, alienation was often understood in different terms, some of which may be described as religious, or versions of idealism (Musto, 2010; Thompson, 1979). Marx himself was quite knowledgeable of, and influenced by, these systems of thought, but he eventually settled for a more foundational materialism, connected to the organization of labour within society, in his major philosophical writings.[8] Nevertheless, two contemporaries who had a profound influence on Marx's thinking were G. W. F. Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach.

1.3.1. G. W. F. Hegel

Prior to Marx there had been descriptions of alienation in theological and philosophical literature and, more recently, within the discourse of English political economic theories (Musto, 2010). It was, however, G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) who addressed alienation in a grand philosophical manner, particularly in his book *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Hegel was an idealist who thought that all phenomena were ideas within a primordial Mind or Spirit. He used the terms *Entäusserung* (self-externalization) and *Entfremdung* (estrangement) to describe the condition of Spirit as it objectified itself into the world of objects, including the realm of human existence. History was for Hegel a dialectical movement in which human beings gradually increased their consciousness of their true relationship to Spirit, thus allowing It to become truly Self-conscious (Thompson, 1979). Hegel believed that the non-alienated state is a non-dualistic, integrated, and whole state of Being; alienation is the splitting of this primordial Subject into two, and human history is the complex narrative of this dualism, played out via alienation, as human beings journey to return to wholeness. It is interesting to note that these ideas are once again gaining traction in contemporary times. David Loy (2019), the Buddhist philosopher, for example, believes that human beings are the mechanism by which the universe not only becomes more complex but also more conscious, ultimately manifesting as a self-consciousness. The important ramification of both Hegel and Loy's observations is that through consciousness, revealed through

[8] For a comparison with existential accounts of alienation found in Heidegger and Laing, see Burston (1998).

human beings, the universe comes to know itself as the Self itself, thus challenging our conventional limited sense of self as separate from others and from nature.

Hegel's contribution to Marx's thought was important for a number of reasons, but particularly as it relates to Marx's understanding of history and relationships (Sayers, 2011). Primarily, Hegel was concerned with developing a theory of history, one that went beyond the static Rousseauian division between civilization and the state of nature (Swain, 2012), and that instead described a history that moves and changes, indeed, improving over time. Improvement implied the realization of freedom which for Hegel meant the ability to express oneself in the world. The freedom of creative expression was the pathway to a reintegration with Spirit and in its Self-realization. It was only in this way that alienation from Spirit could be overcome. Nevertheless, as Hegel was an idealist, it was primarily in the realm of thought that this re-union would occur.

Importantly, Hegel's philosophical system contributed to Marx's holistic understanding of the nature of reality, what Ollman (1977) calls 'the philosophy of internal relations.' Hegel was keen to establish the meaning of specific things in the universe in terms of, and in relation to, the Whole, which he called Spirit, God, or the Absolute. All things for Hegel were related not only to the Whole but to each other in a vast and complex web of interdependent relationships. Unlike Kant before him, Hegel thought that an object was not merely the sum of its qualities but that each of a thing's qualities must be analysed in terms of the whole which had ultimately given rise to it. Hegel thus believed that both truth and knowledge could only be fully grasped when it is connected to the whole and so "to state what is known about any one thing is to describe the system in which it exists; it is to present, as Hegel invariably did, each part as a facet of the whole [and to affirm that] through their interrelations things are more than they appear" (Ollman, 1977, p. 32). This is a particularly crucial notion that I expand on in relation to my discussion of consciousness in Chapter Four of this dissertation, and a key component of how I conceive of how an otherwise traditionally individualistic counselling psychology can effectively engage with social justice issues at a broader systemic level (discussed in Chapter Five). Marx retained the relational, intra- and inter-dependent concept of the connection between things and relations, while discarding Hegel's theistic idealism in favour of an unabashed materialism, influenced by the work of Ludwig Feuerbach, a contemporary of his who thoroughly critiqued Hegel's idealist doctrines.

1.3.2. Ludwig Feuerbach

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) was a contemporary of Marx who critiqued Hegel's system in his 1841 book *The Essence of Christianity*. Feuerbach argued against the idealism of Hegel and, in particular, thought that all religious ideas, especially the notion of God, were a projection of human qualities onto another, a Being created by the human imagination itself (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011). In this way, human beings split themselves off from themselves, with alienation being the predictable and unfortunate result. Alienation for Feuerbach involved the manner in which human qualities like creativity and freedom are appropriated by the imagined Divine Other, increasing its magnificence and at the same time depreciating human imagination and potential, thus making humans powerless and inconsequential (Brien, 2009). If Hegel believed that idea preceded functioning in the world, it was Feuerbach who completely reversed this and claimed that actual engagement with the world preceded ideas, both religious and philosophical, and that if change was to occur it was in the material realm and not in the realm of ideas (Brien, 2009; Swain, 2012). Friedrich Engels, Marx's long-time collaborator, describes the impact of Feuerbach's hypotheses as follows:

> With one blow, it pulverised the contradiction [of the Hegelian system], in that without circumlocutions it placed materialism on the throne again. Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Nothing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence. (as quoted in Swain, 2012, p. 21)

The primacy of engagement with nature was to be an essential point in Marx's thinking on alienation. For him it was the actual, historical, and material conditions of existence that determined legal, philosophical, theological, and social ideas, and not the other way around (his infamous and controversial base and superstructure theory). Yet Marx was not only to dismiss Hegel's idealistic system in favour of a vigorous materialism, but also to criticize Feuerbach himself (Silva, 2017).

1.3.3. Marx's Critiques of Hegel and Feuerbach

Feuerbach's critique of Hegel was that he had matters backwards; alienation was not a result of a dualistic split between human beings and God whose remedy was to re-establish their union, but rather that the split itself was the result of alienation (Silva,

2017). However, for Marx this analysis did not go far enough. While Marx agreed with Feuerbach's adoption of a materialist analysis of society, he still felt that Feuerbach, whose solution to the problem of alienation was education regarding the real nature of people's status in the world, was still far too concerned with the world of ideas. Marx retained Hegel's understanding of the world as interconnected, inter-related, and as aspects of a whole, but he rejected both Hegel's idealism (Swain, 2012) and Feuerbach's solution to resolve the matter. Marx began to develop an understanding of alienation as a result of the material conditions of humans as they engaged with nature, which is to say, in their performance of labour. Feuerbach proposed that education was key to changing society to an unalienated state because he had fixed notions about human nature itself (Swain, 2012). However, Marx did not consider human nature to be describable in isolation and in static terms, but instead considered it to manifest dependent on the context of the social relations humans find themselves within history (Brien, 2009). Consequently, for Marx it was necessary to analyse the structure of society, the central foundation of which was labour and its organization.

1.4. Marx's Idea of Alienation: Labour and Relations of Production

Marx understood alienation as it related to the way in which humans engage with the objects they produce through the labour process. Thus, within capitalist society he associated alienation with the expansion and control of private property, and with the resultant ensuing class divisions. Marx considered alienation a manifestation of corrupted relationships within the personal and social spheres arising from the practices of capitalist accumulation that eroded human creativity and control within places of work (Yuill, 2011).

Historically, Marxist literature has tended to treat alienation as an ontological category, approaching the subject from an oftentimes abstract philosophical perspective, and, as mentioned previously, eschewing the notion of empirical research into the concept. Consequently, the division of labour itself is frequently considered to be alienation under capitalist modes of production (Clarke, 1971). There have, however, been alternative approaches to the subject, many advanced by Western sociologists. These analyses primarily follow the lead of Melvin Seeman (Seeman, 1959), who focused on the social-psychological effects of alienation, with an unambiguous agenda of making the concept accessible to empirical study. As might be expected, these non-

Marxist attempts to define and test alienation were criticized for de-emphasizing alienation's connection to the economic relations of people's material working conditions and instead treating it as a purely subjective experience (Musto, 2010). Clearly, these differences in approach would have ramifications for possibilities of practical personal and political change. Since the sociological approach was seen to ignore the actual socio-historical conditions that lay at the root of alienation, it was critiqued by Marxists as a form of reductionism to the individual level with proposed solutions that were essentially personal and individual. Critiques of the capitalist mode of production were obscured by sociological discourse in favour of "individual maladjustment to social norms" (Musto, 2010, p. 94).

Despite the differences between these two approaches to the subject of alienation, it is apparent that one need not negate the other (Yuill, 2011). On the contrary, both approaches are complementary and, indeed, useful for a broad engagement with alienation's causes and effects at all levels of the human experience. Therefore, I agree with Yuill (2011) that these differences simply describe "whether one [seeks] to explore the sociological causes of alienation with reference to certain social and historical structures, or whether one [wishes] to chart the psychological experiences of alienation as played out in the subjectivities of individual workers" (p. 106), but that they are, nevertheless, not mutually exclusive areas of consideration. I also think that embracing both aspects of alienation fits particularly well with Ollman's concept of 'internal relations' and with the dual-aspect monism I argue for in Chapter Four of this dissertation, which recognizes the presence of parts within wholes, but also wholes within parts. To this end, Yuill considers alienation to be a 'bridging concept', a term he borrows form W. R. Heinz (1991), to emphasize the necessity of considering the socio-historical conditions as a foundation for the appearance of certain socio-psychological experiences.

Alienation is thus a way of describing human experience on three inter-related levels: the intra-psychic, the inter-personal, and the supra-personal, or social. These levels are interconnected and relational (Ollman, 1977). For the purposes of this dissertation, alienation as a bridging concept emphasizes not only the contextual and historical conditions under which it may manifest but also the social-psychological impact on the lives of real individuals (Crinson & Yuill, 2008). It is these conditions and impacts that, I argue, are the principal causes of mental distress in today's world which the

counselling professions are potentially in a unique position to address, but as we shall discover in Chapter Three, very often do not.

1.5. The Importance of Labour

It is through labour and the eventual creation of some form of product that Marx conceived of how human beings engage with their world, constructing and nurturing positive and healthy relationships with themselves and with others (Brien, 2009). For Marx, “labour is an intentional activity designed to produce a change in the material world….[and] as activity through which human beings give form to materials and thus realize themselves in the world” (Sayers, 2011, p. 33). Labour is a way of externalization or objectification through which human beings realize their creative potential within societies of like-minded people. In many ways, Marx may be considered a non-dualist thinker, for while he did not espouse a distinction between humans and society, he did not reduce one to the other. Thus, not only is the environment and society transformed through labour but individuals themselves are also correspondingly changed (Clarke, 1971). Here we see the way in which Marx incorporated Hegel’s spiritual notion around the unfolding of history into a materialist account of historical progress (Sayers, 2011), while rejecting attempts to reduce the individual to society, and vice versa. Unlike other creatures who satisfy their needs in a natural, immediate, and purely pragmatic manner, human beings labour in a variety of ways, not just creating for the sake of immediate personal consumption (as in, for example, hunting, fishing or gathering vegetables, etc.), but also with the intention to conserve an object, to transform animals or people, or to change social relations. It is through our work in the world that humans can objectify themselves, transform themselves, humanise their communities, and find a place on the land to call home (Sayers, 2011).

According to Sayers (2011) there are four main stages in the development of labour. The first is direct appropriation which is the most unmediated and conceptually simple form of work. Hunting and fishing are examples and although there is very little transformation of the object, it nevertheless involves transformation of the labourer in that it involves socially mediated intentionality and the use of tools or weapons (Sayers, 2011) which themselves are objects that have previously been transformed through labour. The second form of work is agriculture in which it becomes more evident that nature is transformed according to the social relations of production as arranged by

human beings. In agriculture human beings actively participate in changing the environment to meet needs but, concurrently, the society itself is transformed and begins to reflect certain modes and relations of production. The third form is craft and industry. Craft can be distinguished from agriculture by its relative autonomy from natural processes and from dependence on nature's fluctuations. The making of crafts involved the production of a material object through the worker's direct action (Sayers, 2011). Craft work was especially suited to reflect the ingenuity, skill, and creativity of the craftsperson and was particularly directed toward the needs of the individual and close community. However, with the rise of capitalism in particular, craft work became the foundation for the development of industry that impacted not only the division of labour into capitalists and workers but, with the introduction of machinery, the way in which tools, that were once directly operated by the worker, were now operated by a machine. Work became a vehicle for the creation and growth of capital, rather than a means to contribute to society or of simple subsistence (Komlosy, 2018). Mass production created an unusual group of workers who ostensibly worked for the same goal; however, the goal no longer functioned to meet individual needs or to establish social bonds, but instead served to achieve market requirements. Furthermore, machines encouraged mechanical work, dictating how work was done, when it was done, and where it was done. The introduction of industrialization and the machine began to create the conditions for the replacement of human beings altogether from the mode of production. The final stage in the development of labour was post-industrial work which includes the expanding service industry, IT jobs, and other forms of the modern information economy. Despite much of this work existing in the realm of knowledge, information, communication, and even emotional appropriation (see, for example, Hochschild, 2011), this does not mean that it is divorced from the material conditions of a society. Intellectual labour is no less essential or impactful in the economy than labour that produces material things. This kind of work still operates by intentionally molding and altering the material world, whether through the use of ideas, symbols, speech, or affect, and is consequently of use-value (Sayers, 2011).

1.6. The Workplace as a Source of Alienation

It is within the world of labour, which I use here in a comprehensive sense to include all forms of human involvement with nature (Erikson, 1986), that the potential roots of alienation lie. Marx sees nature, and human beings' engagement with it, as the

starting point of his analysis of society and political economy. Human interaction with nature is essential to human activity and survival (Foster, 2000). Contrary to Aristotelian notions that humans should strive to exist beyond the drudgery of work, pursuing instead the rational life of the mind (Komlosy, 2018), Marx believed that human beings were primarily producers as they actively interacted with nature through their labour. The importance Marx gives to nature, and his view regarding humans' absolute inseparability from, and inter-connection with, nature, can be seen in his assertion in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* that

> man lives on nature - means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous intercourse if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature. (Marx, Estranged Labour, para. 24)

The 'continuous intercourse' Marx speaks of in this passage reflects not only his understanding of the way humans engage with nature through labour, but more generally of his appreciation, no doubt influenced by Hegel, of the ontological reality of the existence of the part within the whole and the whole within the part (Ollman, 1977).

The relevance of labour as an intermediary between humans and nature has been pointed out by many academic disciplines. Within human evolutionary theory, for example, it is thought that human organs and functions, including the nervous system and imagination, were shaped and molded by their interaction with nature through labour (Erikson, 1986). Similarly, one can see this idea reflected within contemporary psychological circles by theorists like Abraham Maslow whose first two levels of his proposed hierarchy of needs are physiological needs (e.g. food, water, warmth, rest) and security needs (security and safety), both of which are procured through labour. These physical and security requirements are the necessary basis for what Maslow thought were the higher needs of humans, including belonging and love needs, esteem needs and, finally, self-actualization (Maslow, 1971). Work, in fact, broadly encompasses all these needs (a spiritual practice is a practice, after all, requiring work) but it is especially evident in the maintenance of physiological and security needs.

As societies grew more complex there also developed more sophisticated divisions of labour, with certain individuals and groups taking responsibility for more specialized aspects of the production process, leading to socio-political divisions within societies, and thus identifiable divisions of power (Komlosy, 2018). These developments

resulted in the formation of various classes in society, culminating in the particular forms of class division we see in capitalist societies today. Since one class was now liberated from producing through the private ownership of the industries of production, they began to control the production of others, with the effect that the producers lost control of their labour and thereby became alienated (Cox, 1998).

It is important to note that Marx did not think that industrialization itself necessarily led to alienation. It was not the means of production but the relations of production that he felt created alienating working conditions. Furthermore, he was interested in who controlled the means of production, how they controlled it, and, most importantly, for what purposes. His critique of industrialization concerns not mechanization per se, for which he was enthusiastically in favour, but the capitalist system of private ownership of the means of production and the class divisions that formed as a result.

1.7. The Effects of Alienation

If human beings are essentially social beings whose realization of their social and individual natures is found in the production of objects through labour, then “any transcendence of men's products over men so that they do not see their interests, powers, and abilities affirmed and expressed therein, is evidence of the alienation of man from his self-activity, his objects, and himself” (Horton, 1964, p. 289). Capitalism, especially in its modern and insidious neoliberal configuration, is a system that effectively separates the worker from their product to the detriment of the worker’s freedom, creativity, potential, and self-actualization. This is in contrast to work in a non-alienating environment wherein conscious, self-directed activity not only fulfills the needs of the individual and others, but also brings a sense of satisfaction and joy, and the basis for a healthy and happy life (Raekstad, 2015). Human beings, through creative labour and the production of objects, not only achieve something distinctive but by doing so affirm their own uniqueness and individuality. Consequently, through labour people grow as human beings, not only in relationships with themselves and others, but also with nature herself.[9]

[9] Hannah Arendt (1998) makes the distinction between labour, work, and action. Labour is activity related to the fulfillment of needs and the requirements of survival. It is marked by a kind of drudgery and a sense of futility. Work is defined by a

Conversely, when labour in any of its forms is transformed to a means for capital accumulation that ultimately benefits only a small minority of people, where products are created merely for their exchange-value as opposed to their use-value, there is a pervasive loss of meaning, freedom, engagement, creativity, and expression in the lives of the majority of people (Schmitt, 1996). Due to the exchange for wages of the fetishized commodity of labour power, the only possession a property-less worker owns, there is an experiential estrangement from oneself and others, leading to a pernicious stifling of individual potential along with a degradation of fully human relationships. Despite humans' intimate connections to the natural world, alienating social systems simultaneously lead to the subjugation of the human spirit and the rapacious decimation of nature through its exploitation and expropriation (Benton, 2018; Foster & Clark, 2018).

1.8. Marx's Fourfold Conceptualization of Alienation and its Effects

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx outlines his conception of four ways in which alienation affects the worker within capitalist society, a society primarily (though not solely) distinguished by two antagonistic classes, the property owners, or employers, and the property-less workers, or employees. I am particularly drawn to Marx's conception of alienation and his description of its effects as it resonates deeply with my own experiences as a long-time corporate employee. But it was not just the work itself that epitomized the condition of alienation, it was also the culture and environment. From the blandly coloured, homogenous cubicles, with their partitions that served to discourage interaction with others but which still allowed for surveillance by management, to the systems and procedures that functioned to deliver the cost-saving requirements of the bosses but which failed to meet the needs of both the employees or the customers, to the infantilization of employees through bizarre and sometimes incoherent communications and protocols: all of these representations, and many more, served as manifestations and signals of alienation from the product, from the means of production, from others, and finally, from oneself, explicated so compellingly by Marx's analysis.

utilitarian creation of objects, with a more definitive beginning and ending. Action represents the expression of the individual in word and deed, and functions to establish and maintain relationship.

1.8.1. Alienation from the Product

Marx's integral and relational approach to nature through labour can be seen in his discussion of the way in which workers under capitalism become estranged from the products they create as they engage in wage labour. As a consequence of the employer's appropriation of the product, within which the worker has invested their life-energy, the employee finds that

> his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects. Whatever the product of his labor is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him; it means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien. (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 9)

In previous forms of society products made by the worker were fashioned by creative activity and were kept, exchanged, or sold according to the desire and needs of the producer. For hundreds of years, even in the feudal societies that preceded capitalist societies, at least part of the person's labour, perhaps up to 70%, was retained by workers to do with as they wished (Mandel, 1973). However, in capitalist societies the item produced is immediately seized and made use of by another, the capitalist employer, who, after paying wages, sells it for profit. Under capitalism, the worker has no control over the product of their labour and, since the product has now become the property of someone else who disposes of it as they see fit without consultation with the worker, alienation from the product naturally follows for the worker (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011).

This aspect of alienation is further exacerbated by the reality that in many cases the workers are themselves unable to afford the very products they are making so that "workers produce cash crops for the market when they are malnourished, build houses in which they will never live, make cars they can never buy, produce shoes they cannot afford to wear, and so on" (Cox, 1998). For Marx this state of affairs is a unique function of the capitalist mode of production, and despite improvements in some sectors of the modern workplace (although this is often merely a function of easy access to credit), particularly in North America and Europe, it is as true today worldwide as it was in

Marx's time. Indeed, currently workers in China earn $172 per month for making Apple's iPhones, products which the workers could barely, if ever, afford. Worldwide, more than one billion workers earn less than $1 a day, and two billion earn up to $2 a day (Swain, 2012).

Alienation from the product shows up in another way. The objects that workers themselves produce often function to oppose the interests of those same workers. The introduction of machinery and, in more recent times, computerization, all of which are made by workers, forces employees to work according to the dictates of the machine's program, which are inevitably determined by the employer. In this way, machines often dehumanize workers because they tend to eliminate their skills (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011) and reify their 'insider knowledge' of work processes and practices. Consequently, workers must oftentimes work harder, faster, and under conditions that are more suited to machines than human beings. Shift work, and engaging with emails and texts outside of working hours are examples of the effects modern technology has had on the natural rhythms of the working day, and which can for many people result in physical and mental disturbances (Mandel, 1973). Arguments have been made that computerization has made work more efficient, accessible, and faster for certain workers but it still remains true that manual production workers and low-status service workers do not experience such freedom as compared to others. As well, computerization invites employers to exert more control, surveillance, and discipline over users, both at home and at the workplace (Archibald, 2009). Hence, the machinery that workers themselves produce serves to oppress those very same individuals.

It is in the act of creating an object, in its objectification, that creativity and fulfillment in work is realized; however, as we have seen, under capitalism this object is taken by another for their own purposes. Thus, unlike Hegel's belief that objectification per se was problematic, it is not the process of objectification itself that is an issue in Marx's analysis, but instead the capitalist mode of production, consisting primarily of wage labour in exchange for the production of objects that become divorced from the workers themselves (Musto, 2010). By appropriating the object created by the worker, the employer simultaneously procures their creativity. There is, therefore, a psychological and spiritual decrease in the experience of the worker, an impoverishment of the natural joy, freedom, and expression that should normally accompany engagement with nature through work. These effects are especially increased within the

Tayloristic business practices of today's workforces wherein the harder and faster a person works, the more and more exhausted they become both physically and psychologically (Sharma, 1979).

1.8.2. Alienation from the Act of Production

Marx understood that not only were employees alienated from the objects they produced but also from the act of producing those objects, which he considered "active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation" (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 19). There are many aspects to this form of alienation. It is the employer who sets the times of work, the hours of work, and the schedules for breaks. The employer also supplies the tools or equipment to be used and dictates the pace of work. The worker has no control over the processes of the workplace, nor how it is organized (Cox, 1998; Davies, 2015). The work and its processes, much like the product itself, appears to the employee as extrinsic and remote, and this has clear psychological and emotional effects (Weyher, 2012). Labour, says Marx,

> is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague. (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 19)

Assembly type work and the introduction of various forms of Taylorism in the 20th century, like Toyotaism and 'lean management' practices, saw the specialization and fragmentation of work functions expected to be performed at high intensity and which created inherently boring, physically repetitive work (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011; Harriford & Thompson, 2008). These practices were not limited to the factory floor, however, but also implemented within white-collar occupations, resulting in a de-skilling of the work force.[10] Furthermore, concentration on smaller and smaller working tasks

[10] I am all too familiar with these practices. However, it was always my observation that the unending reviews, meetings, committees, checks on authority, and all the other countless means of surveillance seemed to hinder productivity rather than enhance it.

allowed management and employers to further control the workers through surveillance and disciplinary measures. Workers were essentially treated as machines (Cox, 1998). Marx decries this as the worker's loss of the self, a situation in which human beings lose connection with their higher intellectual and spiritual functions, being reduced to living solely from their animal natures. Allowing that "drinking, eating, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions", Marx nevertheless felt that "in the abstraction which separates them from the sphere of all other human activity and turns them into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal" (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 21).

A central and important feature of alienation from work-process is the glaring lack of control that workers have over their working conditions. The significance of this will be developed later but it is clear that capitalist workplaces of whatever sort conspire to allow workers very little, if any, control over their working conditions in the interest of increasing surplus value[11] and profits for the company. A stark example of this extreme form of control may be given from a February 2018 article in *The Guardian* news-site documenting a patented design by the mega-company Amazon for a wristband that is designed to electronically monitor the location of a worker's hands, so that a vibrating system can move the worker's hand in the direction that would more efficiently fulfill a particular order. As the article points out, apart from the indignity of treating employees like human robots, the wristbands would also arm Amazon management with new workplace surveillance capabilities that can identify when workers are wasting time, however defined (Solon, 2018). As workers are demeaned and dehumanized in this manner, essentially mechanized for the purposes of increased efficiencies, more productivity, and better surveillance purposes, it is difficult to imagine that people would not be psychologically damaged by such practices. Additionally, for the employee there is always the lingering fear that the real thing, full automation, will make the person's job redundant. Marx was indeed prescient in foreseeing that "since the worker has sunk to the level of a machine, he can be confronted by the machine as a competitor" (Marx, 2016, Wages of Labor, para.18).

[11] Surplus may be defined as the excess amount of value created by a workers' labor above the value paid to them in wages. If an employer pays a worker $10 per hour, they need to get back more than $10 worth of extra output per hour to sell. Surplus represents an employer's revenue after direct input and labor costs are satisfied to produce the output in the first place. A business's profits represent one portion of the surplus. In any event, all of the surplus, created by the labour of the worker, is appropriated by the employer (Wolff, 2012). This practice is the heart of a system that is unjust, undemocratic, and unfair, and is the basis for the economic inequalities which result from it.

The determinative factor here is a sense of lack of control, powerlessness, and certainly a lived experience of being controlled by others (Yuill, 2011). Interestingly, lack of control has been theorized by some to be the main component of depression. The theory of learned helplessness, for example, was proposed by psychologist Martin E. P. Seligman (Seligman, 1972) in the late 1960s and 1970s as an explanatory framework for depression in humans (Seeman, 1983). Experimenting with classical conditioning, Seligman found that dogs that had received unavoidable electric shocks refused to take action in follow-up situations, despite the possibility of escape or avoidance, whereas dogs that had not received the unavoidable shocks immediately took action in follow-up tests. The experiment was subsequently replicated with human subjects (using loud noise instead of electric shocks), and the results were much the same. As Yuill (2011) proposes, the concept of alienation provides a useful 'bridging concept' between the helpless and powerless conditions of working life in society and an individual's emotional, psychological, and spiritual response to those conditions.

1.8.3. Alienation from Others

There are two main manifestations of Marx's claim that work under capitalist systems leads to alienation from others. The first aspect is the alienation between the employer and the employee, between those who produce surplus value and those who appropriate it for their own profit. This form of alienation is thus the essence of class formation (but also the ground for class struggle), an artificial division in socio-political life that separates people according to conflicting economic interests, and is the basis of our current understanding of inequality and its effects. The impacts of social inequality are well documented.[12] Even in contemporary times, working people are subject to higher rates of chronic illness, early mortality, and increased morbidity, despite modernization of the workplace and improved medical services (Yuill, 2005; Davies, 2015). It is important to note here that class is not defined simply on the basis of strata or population aggregates ranked on the usual economic indicators of income, occupation, and education, for example, but instead on relations inherent within the production process itself (Gimenez, 2001; Scambler & Higgs, 1999). As Marx points out:

[12] For example, an extensive report produced in Britain in 1998, *Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health Report,* found that the preponderance of scientific evidence pointed to socioeconomic explanations of health inequalities. Ill health was attributed to factors such as income, education, and employment, in addition to material environment and lifestyle.

> If the product of labor does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, this can only be because it belongs to some other man than the worker. If the worker's activity is a torment to him, to another it must be delight and his life's joy. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man. (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 42)

The worker is alienated from the employer but the employer, despite their 'joy' and 'delight', does not escape this fate themselves. They, too, are alienated but it reveals itself in different ways as it might for the worker (Ollman, 2007). Unfortunately, any chance of a natural and truly human relationship between employer and worker is destroyed by the economic imperatives of the system within which they both work. Indeed, relationships become defined by labels which describe people's functions and not their being. Hence, we relate to others as bosses and employees, competitors and team-players, those in-the-know and those who are not. These are what Istvan Meszaros calls 'second-order mediations' which effectively prevent true human connection not only between the worker and the employer, but also between human beings and nature, including their own self-nature (Meszaros, 2006).

The second aspect of alienation from others is that it disturbs, distorts, and endangers the relationship between workers. As neoliberal capitalism is based on an almost religious individualism, it actively encourages competition and the so-called survival of the fittest mentality among workers (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011). Workers not only compete for jobs, but once employed they are required to compete with each other to 'get ahead'. In many ways Marx's critique is fundamentally a critique of the spreading individualism, and the consumerism based on it, that was becoming ubiquitous during the time he was living in, and which is now rampant within our own modern society. Commodities, including the worker themselves, become the measure of the worth of individuals, who are defined by their possessions (Klotz, 2006).

A corresponding aspect of Marx's theory of alienation, particularly relevant to our interest in the adverse effects it has on relationships at all levels between individuals, is his notion of commodity fetishism. Alienation, when conceptualized as a lack of worker control over the labour process, and although existent in many different systems of production, takes a peculiar and particular form under capitalism (Swain, 2012). One might look at feudalism for a comparison. During feudal times there was a direct relationship between the serf and the lord whereby the product of the serf's labour was exchanged in a direct, immediate fashion. This was still clearly a relationship of power

and coercion of one class over another, but nevertheless the relationship itself was unambiguous. Capitalism, however, does not display such a direct and unambiguous relationship between persons. Instead, capitalism organizes itself based on relationships of exchange in the market, with the worker's own labour power as the commodity bought by the capitalist. Relationships are not direct or based on human connection; they are turned into relationships between objects, which Marx called commodity fetishism (Swain 2012). When any object, including the labour power of the worker, is regarded as something with value, it becomes a commodity and immediately comes into a kind of transcendent relationship with other commodities (Roberts, 2015). The value of a commodity should normally be understood in relation to the social relations that produces it, but, under capitalism, it is not; rather, its value is determined in relation to other commodities and to money, and the goods money can buy (Billig, 1999). Thus, the social relationships normally found between workers is transferred onto their labour power and the products of their labour, depriving them of the richness and fulfillment of genuine human relationships, and replacing them with the unnatural, commodified relationships of the marketplace (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011).

As a result of this, and as it becomes more and more entrenched within the system and within the experience of individuals, there is a collective forgetting of the nature of real and truly human relationships. Society's customs are the means by which a general social forgetting is produced so that unawareness is embedded into the system (Billig, 1999). Social media is a good example of the way in which advertisers target users under the pretense that they are developing and nurturing real relationships.[13] Gilroy-Ware (2017) argues that "social media platforms exploit our compulsive, emotionally-driven relationship to them, seeking surplus value in the misery that capitalism itself creates" (Preface, para. 8). Fetishized objects thus attain a relational status that drives consumer capitalism, but to the detriment of real, human relationship both in and outside the workplace.

Swain (2012) makes the point that Marx is not suggesting that the accumulation of objects themselves is problematic, but because commodities are given all the qualities

[13] Advertising of products and psychology have a long history together. Segal (2017) notes, for example, that in the early twentieth century Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, employed the analyst Abraham Brill to use psychoanalytic techniques to assist in advertising cigarettes for the American Tobacco Company, which were branded as 'torches of freedom', and representative of women's liberation.

of real relationships, people's sense of themselves, indeed their very identity and who they consider themselves to be, is deeply connected to the appropriation and possession of material objects; to have is to be (Billig, 1999). People are bombarded with seductive advertising in one form or another advocating consumption from every possible direction, 24 hours a day. The fundamental message is that to be any sort of valued person in the world, whatever that may mean, one must acquire objects to realize it. Workers displace their potential for real relationship, connection, and creative self-worth into the objects they produce; these products are appropriated by the capitalist class and sold back to workers for profit in the marketplace as commodities with the narrative that these same products are the sure means to creating satisfying lives and relationships. There is a perversion to this. It is thought that human beings are one of the most social creatures on the planet and that relationships are essential to not only physical health but also to mental well-being. The capitalist mode of production, however, transfers relational connection onto commodities, and, for a price, we are convinced that these important aspects of our existence can be found and developed through consumption.

Yet, it goes further than this. As Naomi Klein (2009) argues in her book *No Logo*, selling commodities is not enough. Companies now are far more interested in selling their brand which is their real product, so that although advertising is connected to selling a specific product, branding is about 'corporate transcendence' (Klein, 2009). As a consequence, companies are selling not just things, but experiences, lifestyles, and ways of being, resulting in an associated colonization of the mind. The pernicious effect of these practices is that individuals develop the ever-present feeling that they are not good enough in some way (but usually in multiple ways), reflected generally in a pervasive sense of low self-worth and self-acceptance, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns.

Furthermore, by selling brands and labels rather than commodities per se, there is a mass societal forgetting of the relationship between the commodity and how, where, and when it was produced, and, most importantly for an analysis of human relationship, who produced it. The labels attached to products themselves become objects of fetishism, and are intimately tied to the purchaser's sense of themselves. Despite the fact that other brands may be of high quality, allegiance to the preferred label is obligatory and all other labels are, consequently, rejected (Billig, 1999). Just as the

worker, as the producer of products, very often can never afford to purchase that product themselves, and are thereby alienated from the product, so too the consumer who purchases the product must never consciously make the connection between the product and the maker of it. Social relations must be obscured for the product to be effectively felt to be truly owned by the purchaser. This unconscious, alienated darkening of actual relationships is required for the construction of the capitalist sense of self since, as Billig (1999) points out, “my sense of possession would be diminished - as well as my consuming self - if I took seriously those dark, busy fingers, working in conditions far removed from the life-world of my playful self” (Billig, 1999, p. 319). Thus, a sense of self is constructed based on relationships to commodities owned, and to comparisons with the commodities owned by others (Billig, 1999). Consumerism constitutes a societal basis for the construction of identity, with the purchase of products being a measure of status, popularity, group-identity, and other such qualities normally associated with identity formation. But because consumerism involves the consumption of branded ideas, rather than the fulfillment of natural human psychological needs, our consumption becomes an alienation between our sensuous and emotional bodies, creating a kind of constructed capitalist rationalism, a continuous perpetuation of endless need and consumption. Yet, these needs can never really be satisfied through consumption. Not only are the needs themselves artificially contrived, but their satisfaction is dependent on artificial ideas rather than on real products which meet actual needs. Identity may be manufactured in this way but ultimately the sense of self constructed is false (Matthews, 2019) because it is really only an unnatural internalization of capitalist social relations and commodification (Cohen, 1986). A false self can never feel authentic, nor can it be actualized in terms of its relationship to itself or to others. It is trapped in inauthenticity because its lived relationships are, first, unconscious of the real nature of production and the actual relations between producer and consumer and, second, because these commodity relations are inherently oppressive, always promising what they can never truly deliver and, most significantly, causing feelings of not-good-enough as a result. A primary way of dealing with such psychological pain is, of course, to consume more products, thus endlessly perpetuating the cycle.[14]

[14] This might easily be described as addiction. For an excellent explication of this view see Alexander (2010), especially pages 255-260.

Despite a superficial recognition that the pursuit of consumer goods is essentially unsatisfying, there appears to be a cultural obliviousness to all this, a form of cultural forgetting, or, in psychological parlance, repression. Billig (2011) connects this social and cultural 'forgetting' (with some caveats) to Freud's theory of repression, but he does not specifically discuss the mental health consequences of these practices in people's lives. Yet, it is not unreasonable to make this connection. Certainly, there have been many studies that show a correlation between attempts to repress negative thoughts and an increase in anxiety and depression. Any attempts to control unwanted thoughts and emotions, either through avoidance or escape strategies, can account for much mental health distress (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). For example, individuals have reported that their chronic thought suppression leads to obsessive behaviour and feelings of depression and anxiety (Wegner & Zanakos, 1994).

Our current system not only functions to supply commodities to fulfill basic human needs but must then continue on to manufacture and promote more and more unnecessary and trivial needs. The circulation of capital requires the construction of a society of perpetual need, consequent dissatisfaction, and competition between its members. The working class becomes divided against itself, with friends and neighbours contending for jobs, products, and brands. It is within these cultures of individualism, generated by a rapacious capitalism's profit motive, that inequalities due to class are strengthened, intersecting and emboldening sexism, racism, and homophobia (Swain, 2012), and leading to many of the mental health issues presented to the helping professions today.

Capitalist divide and conquer strategies means that there is less likelihood that workers will mobilize to stand up to unfavourable working conditions. Since unionization, historically one of the primary forces to oppose workplace inequities, has in recent decades reached an all-time low,[15] it becomes safer now to show up for work and hope for the best, despite possible poor working conditions or outright oppression and abuse. If we define oppression as a situation wherein there exists asymmetric power relations evidenced by domination, subordination, and resistance, and where "the controlling person or group exercise its power by processes of political exclusion and violence and by psychological dynamics of deprecation" (Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 195), then this is none

[15] See Statistics Canada report: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015005-eng.htm

other than a description of capitalist social relations in general, and workplace conditions in particular. By persistently showing up for work and enduring the conditions there, there is always the aspiration of 'getting ahead' and, through hard work, perhaps eventually removing oneself from a difficult work environment (Swain, 2012). In this way employers encourage workers to work harder, for longer, but for the same pay, thus increasing the surplus value for the employer which, in a vicious cycle, only inevitably serves to increase the feeling of alienation between workers, and between the worker and the employer. It also encourages companies to do more with less workers, allowing them to close locations at home and re-locate to off-shore locations where labour is cheaper and regulations are poor or non-existent.

1.8.4. Alienation from Oneself

Marx's final manifestation of alienation due to working conditions under capitalist systems is alienation from oneself, what he calls alienation from 'species-being'. Marx writes that

> It is just in the working-up of the objective world, therefore, that man first really proves himself to be a species being. This production is his active species life. Through and because of this production, nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the objectification of man's species life: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he contemplates himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labor tears from him his species life, his real species objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him. Similarly, in degrading spontaneous activity, free activity, to a means, estranged labor makes man's species life a means to his physical existence. (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 31)

Here Marx discusses the impact of alienation on the person's sense of themselves as a human being in the world. Using the much debated term 'species-being,' Marx indicates that although work, and its products, whatever they may be, should be expression of the unique human ability to creatively express their life while engaged with nature, this is destroyed by capitalist modes of production. Despite capitalist systems of production being extraordinarily efficient in creating commodities for

society,[16] there is a high price to pay for those who must produce them. Certainly, it is the capitalist, and not the worker, who enjoys the benefits of goods produced; but, more crucially, the worker experiences a fundamental lack of power and control which may result in profound physical and mental challenges. Marx therefore argues that whereas labour under capitalism creates riches, possessions, property, and beauty for the owners of capital, it creates privation, hovels, and deformity for the workers, turning them into machines. Furthermore, Marx thought that these systems of production invited intelligence, but only for the owners; for the workers it produced idiocy and cretinism (Marx, 2016).

Thus, Marx was concerned with the impacts of working conditions and divisions of labour on all aspects of the self. For example, in the first volume of *Capital*, Ollman (1977) lists stunted size, bent backs, overdeveloped and underdeveloped muscles, gnarled fingers, enlarged lungs, and death pale complexions as some of Marx's observations of the physical effects of production on workers of his time. But it is clear that Marx was greatly concerned with the mental consequences of the repetitive, uncreative, stressful work he witnessed in industrial workplaces, performed within conditions that were oppressive, exploitative, and undemocratic, all of which engendered class divisions and inequality. Of course, Marx did not provide a psychological theory of the impacts of alienation on workers' mental life, but it is undeniable that he was nevertheless troubled by the effects of alienated existence on the wholeness and integrity of the human condition, and with the 'loss of the self'. Two of these aspects are alienation from emotional life and alienation from sensual life.

1.9. Alienation of the Emotions

Yuill (2005) suggests that alienation theory offers the proposition that lack of social cohesion results in the generation of the so-called negative emotions which in turn adversely affect health. Alienation theory takes into account the emotional distress that people experience in situations of inequality, powerlessness, and lack of control and it provides an explanation, therefore, of the genesis of mental health issues people subsequently and frequently experience (Weyher, 2012). Consequently, taming

[16] Despite Marx's critique of capitalism, he thought that it was a necessary condition for the rise of socialism. As Eagleton (2011) points out, only capitalism's greed can lead to the development of the productive forces to the extent that they can be transformed into the means to benefit all.

emotional experience, rather than looking to the socio-economic determinants of their origination, becomes the objective of the society. Anger, for example, often a response to injustice and important energetically for righting perceived wrongs (Holmes, 2004; Segal, 2017), is pathologized and frowned upon within Western culture. Since anger is perceived by those in power, whether they are school authorities or employers, as a dangerous or destructive emotion, steps are taken to neutralize or repress it, or, perhaps through learning 'anger management' techniques, often through a suitable 'expert', learn to express the emotion in a more acceptable, and usually benign, fashion (Zembylas, 2007a). The assumption behind such practices is that rationality must make docile any emotional expression that challenges the status quo, that reason is the handmaiden of good sense and order as opposed to the unpredictability and chaos of the emotions. Inevitably, distinctions between the reasonability of the rational and the wildness of the emotions are gendered, creating a sexism, entwined with classism, that perpetuates discriminatory practices against women. Alienation of the rational from the emotional thus demands techniques of control, curative strategies to encourage the development of emotional intelligence. Managing emotions, especially in school and in the workplace, becomes a necessary life-skill for the undisturbed and unopposed production of capitalist wealth. This requires emotional labour, a rational, unpaid form of internal work which, despite perpetuating psychic splits within individuals, has the ultimate intent of supporting the continuous flow of capital. Emotional labour in the workplace requires the management of emotion through prescribed 'feeling rules', which function to regulate one's own emotions and manipulate those of others (Zembylas & Fendler, 2007). The alienation and disciplining of the emotions not only creates anxiety in the lives of persons but it marginalizes emotional experience to the periphery of experience, instead of recognizing that emotions, seen in a holistic and integral way, are vital to the production and health of the individual, and with the individual's interaction with society (Zembylas, 2007b).

1.10. Alienation of the Senses

In many respects Marx's notion of alienation was a critique of the way in which our sensuous life, the full and vital activity of the senses, was thwarted within the new industrial political economy. The individualism of capitalism and neoliberal philosophy results in an alienation from the senses themselves, a kind of sensuous break from the social community of sharing and meaning-making. Capitalist economic arrangements

depend on individualism, isolation, and competition (as Margaret Thatcher infamously said ‘there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women…’) but these forms of being-in-the-world are unsocial and unnatural, and they embed the sensuous life of people within fragmented inner spaces, devoid of empathy and possibility. Marx emphasized, in contrast, the importance of individuality as entirely dependant on its social sphere such that individual life was always a reflection of the life of the society in which it was embedded (Marx, 2016), and this included the sensuous world of individuals. Marx’s unalienated vision was for the freeing of the senses from commodification, towards an

> emancipation of the senses [which] means freeing them from their embeddedness in the possessive individual. The eye only becomes a truly ‘human eye’ when the beauty enjoyed by another becomes available as ‘my own appropriation.’ What Marx envisions here is nothing less than the abolition of the Cartesian mind/body split, along with the opposition between public and private. (Klotz, 2006, p. 412)

It would be worthwhile to pause here to reflect on what I think is the implication of what Marx is offering his readers. Alienation can be considered a condition that fundamentally describes a state of duality at multiple levels of being. It is a separation of an originally undivided self, one with nature, into isolated domains of life which in reality cannot be separated without individual and societal disharmony. In terms of our interest in the effects of alienation on the human condition, specifically people’s mental health, if we accept the proposition that the world is an inter-dependant and intra-dependant whole, as Ollman contends with his notion of ‘internal relations’, then we could say that any fissures or divisions that unnaturally isolate one thing from another is contrary to reality, and therefore bound to create distress in some form. Thus, when we consider our social self, alienation occurs when there are undemocratic and unequal splits in the way society is constituted, that is, between owners of capital and employees. If we next consider our natural self, when there are splits between the individual and their labour, both in terms of the products they make and the way in which they produce them, alienation constitutes a separation from nature. When the worker is treated, both by a materialist science and by capitalist employers, as a machine, individuals experience a self/other dualism wherein they take themselves to be an isolated, separate self as opposed to the ‘other’, one organism against another. At a deeper level, materialist conceptions of the person split the individual into a mind and a body, which are often in discord as a result, and which, as Klotz points out above, become privatized and

disconnected. Finally, the separate mental self itself is split into various antagonisms (emotion v. reason, conscious v. unconscious, etc.) which further perpetuate the alienated condition. Moreover, all these aspects of the self create more 'resources' to be mined as commodities by capitalists, who are forever inventing new but concocted needs to be fulfilled. Thus, the separate self, at whatever level it is conceived, is the embodiment of the alienated condition, its being, at one or all levels, dissociated from the 'other', with the result that its isolation leads to distress in one form or another. The remedy to such pain, therefore, is the unalienated state, which, as I will elucidate later, is accomplished by both transforming systemic structures within society and by recognizing and actualizing the experience of consciousness as the essential nature of all things. The effect of these transitions is the unification of mind to matter within both individuals and the natural world, and the unification of individuals to the societies and places they inhabit. For example, Young (1975) makes the comment in regards to the emancipation of the senses that

> [a]t a more abstract level, Marx held that man creates himself as a rich, social individual by means of the human enjoyment of all the senses. The more modes of sensuous contact with things of nature, things of life, and things of man, the greater the degree of facticity of being. The greater the social nature of the sensual contact, the greater the degree of human being; to love, but to love as a social experience; to enjoy, but to enjoy as a social, rather than commercial or as a purely private experience. Marx provided a theoretical and practical alternate to an ideology which sanctioned experience devoid of its social meaning. By so doing, Marx sought to restore to a modern generation, as did Freud, the human dimension of sensuality. (Young, 1975, p. 32)

All this is true in my view, but it also further requires an appreciation of the vehicle through which social life is created, which I contend is an intellectual and experiential grounding in the experience of consciousness itself, the fundamental source of the unity that is ultimately desired in an unalienated state. I say more about this argument in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Marx complained that capitalist workplaces were places where an individual does "not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind...the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another, *it is the loss of his self* [emphasis added]'' (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 20). If we accept that modern workplaces are sites for the development and perpetuation of alienation between individuals and society, between individuals and their various relationship

arrangements, and within the psychological and bodily experience of individuals themselves, then the potential for the appearance of mental health issues can certainly be expected. How, then, is alienation actually experienced in the lives of people? How does it manifest, particularly in the workplace?

1.11. The Experience of Alienation

We might begin by theorizing in what specific ways alienation manifests in the experience of persons that could result in the development of the possibility of mental health issues.

1.11.1. Seeman's Explication of Alienation

In 1959 Melvin Seeman, a sociologist, wrote a seminal paper which attempted to define the experience of alienation from various points of view, but focusing in particular on the social-psychological aspects of the phenomena (Seeman, 1959). Seeman distinguished five ways of understanding alienation with a particular interest in making the concept open to the possibility of empirical testing and analysis (Yuill, 2011). He did this by aligning his definitions of each of alienation's aspects with learning theory, particularly that of J. B. Rotter who developed theories based on social learning, and taking care to account for environmental context. Seeman's first aspect of alienation was a sense of *powerlessness* and is perhaps the closest to the traditional general Marxist understanding of the actual powerlessness experienced in the capitalist workplace due to the control of the means of production and appropriation of the product itself from the worker. Powerlessness here is conceived as a frustration of the expected outcome or reinforcement in connection to the individual's behaviours (Seeman, 1959). Seeman is careful to make the point that powerlessness may involve a number of contingencies which mitigate a person's felt experience. Nevertheless, he notes that generally the experience of powerlessness aligns well with behaviourist psychological theory which distinguishes between internal and external loci of control and reinforcement so that "the congruence in these formulations leaves the way open for the development of a closer bond between two languages of analysis - that of learning theory and that of alienation - that have long histories in psychology and sociology" (Seeman, 1959, p. 785). Powerlessness has been postulated, as mentioned previously, to be causal in the

appearance of clinical depression in persons, with emotional stress playing a primary role (Seligman, 1972).

Seeman's second aspect of alienation is *meaninglessness*, which he defines in Manheimian terms. It refers to the inability of a worker to understand the meaning of various options or alternatives presented to him, when "the individual is unclear as to what he ought to believe - when the individual's minimal standards for clarity in decision-making are not met" (Seeman, 1959, p. 786). As a consequence, as societies become more complex and rational in their construction and maintenance, a circumstance certainly reflected in modern workplaces in particular, there is an inability to be confident in choosing between differing explanatory offerings. Again, this may be experienced as the kind of hopelessness and meaninglessness that has been connected to depression, and for which there is very good evidence (Westgate, 1996).

A third understanding of alienation as proposed by Seeman was *normlessness* which he equates with Durkheim's concept of *anomie* traditionally understood to indicate "a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behavior" (Seeman, 1959, p. 787). A society, or workplace for that matter, that expresses *anomie* is one in which there is a fundamental lack of trust and a general dissolution of public values into individually justified private interests. This concept is closely connected to both powerlessness and meaninglessness, and all of them may be similarly applied to individual or societal realms. In this regard, and as an illustrative example, Dew and Taupo (2009) draw a connection between presenteeism, wherein workers stay at work even when injured or ill, and workplace injustice, which reflects a sense of uncertainty within modern workplaces and the lack of a moral and just regulatory force.

Isolation is the fourth of Seeman's understandings of alienation which he sees as "those who, like the intellectual, assign low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society" (Seeman, 1959, pp. 788-789). This is not merely a difference in sociability or the ability to make and keep friends; rather, it is more in line with an isolation from societal goals, values, and standards. As might be expected, there is a disturbing connection between loneliness and certain psychological distresses. In a review of the literature, Mushtaq, Shoib, Shah, & Mushtaq (2014) found a relationship between loneliness and a variety of health issues including depression,

Alzheimer's disease, alcoholism, stress disorders, personality disorders, suicide, child abuse, and sleep disfunction.

The fifth concept of alienation as presented by Seeman is that of *self-estrangement*. This again appears very similar to Marx's concept of alienation from species-being. As Seeman points out, it is the Marxist psychoanalyst Erich Fromm who makes use of this sense of alienation in his own writings. Seeman has difficulty conceptualizing what estrangement of the self is exactly and decides that "to be self-alienated, in the final analysis, means to be something less than one might ideally be if the circumstances in society were otherwise - to be insecure, given to appearances, conformist" (Seeman, 1959, p. 790). Seeman believes he comes closest to Marx's meaning when he suggests that alienation in this form is akin to a lack of pride in work, a hurried and harried sense of doing things to get done with them, just because they need to be done, and without the joy, satisfaction, or sense of playfulness that accompanies truly creative and non-estranged work. Yet, despite Seeman's goal of operationalizing his concepts for the purposes of opening up empirical research possibilities, and doing so using the language of learning theory (which tends to ignore inner states of being), it is nevertheless clear that self-estrangement may also be problematized in terms of various intra-psychic, emotional, rational, and spiritual rifts within an individual, a pervasive existential sense of being de-centered, ungrounded, and incomplete in some fashion (Brien, 2009).

Some have criticized Seeman's sociological approach to alienation as refusing to acknowledge troublesome relations of production and of thus being essentially ahistorical (Musto, 2011). These kinds of critiques are also directed toward other writers who have written variously about alienation, like Jean-Paul Sartre, Erich Fromm, and others, and who similarly have been accused of ignoring the social and historical conditions of the phenomenon (Bartlett & Shodell, 1963; Horton, 1964; Musto, 2011). Musto (2011) says of Fromm, for example, that he

> likewise always put the main emphasis on subjectivity, and his concept of alienation, which he summarized as "a mode of experience in which the individual experiences himself as alien," remained too narrowly focused on the individual. Moreover, his account of Marx's concept based itself only on the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 and showed a deep lack of understanding of the specificity and centrality of alienated labour in Marx's thought. This lacuna prevented Fromm from giving due weight to

> objective alienation (that of the worker in the labour process and in relation to the labour product) and led him to advance positions that appear disingenuous in their neglect of the underlying structural relations. (Musto, 2010, p. 86)

Still, the extent to which Fromm may have emphasized the psychological aspects of alienation over relations of production as the source of the experience is perhaps to be expected as he was a psychoanalyst. Nevertheless, if we understand alienation as a bridging concept (Heinz, 1991) between alienating workplace conditions and the experience of alienation in the lives of persons, including the inevitable mental health issues, then it is my view that such psycho-social understandings are to be welcomed, particularly if the case is to be made for the way in which such conditions overtly affect mental health under current economies.

1.11.2. Species-being, Human Nature, and Consciousness in Marx

There has been much debate regarding Marx's understanding of human nature (Geras, 2016). Early in his writing he uses the peculiar term 'species-being' to refer to the unique qualities of humankind as differentiated from animals, and how these affect their engagement with the world. Marx clearly appears to attribute consciousness only to humans, making it the distinguishing factor between human and animal activity in the world, and further evidenced by the quality of freedom. He writes:

> The animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life-activity. Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity. It is just because of this that he is a species being. Or it is only because he is a species being that he is a Conscious Being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity. (Marx, 2016, Estranged Labor, para. 29)

Clearly, Marx's view of human nature would have some impact on his theory of alienation. Some writers believe Marx held to an historicist view of human nature (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011), taking Marx's famous saying that humans are none other than the ensemble of social relations to heart, and arguing that there is no such thing as an enduring human nature per se but instead that humans manifest themselves dependent on the historical and socio-economic conditions of the time (Byron, 2016). For these writers, Marx conceives of human nature as itself the totality of relationships people have

with nature and with others. There is no notion of an isolated, separate self-nature inside the person apart from these relationships. The person can only be a human person within the network of connections to other humans, to nature, and to meaningful work (Andrew & Ollman, 1973). As a corollary to this view, I might mention that some writers, like Louis Althusser, believe that the mature Marx discarded all notions of a human essence developed in his youth and that it is to the later works of Marx that we must turn to appreciate his more sophisticated views of the matter. Consequently, Althusser and his followers also dismissed Marx's writings on alienation as an early concept that he later abandoned (Archibald, 2009).

Alternatively, there is the trans-historical view which holds that Marx did have a notion of a human essence that transcended history (Geras, 2016). I agree with Geras (2016) that Marx did think human beings had a human nature, and that although it was conditioned or manifested within the ensemble of social relations, it was not social relations themselves. Byron (2016) comments that although this position has been held by a number of other writers it has not been particularly well explicated in the literature. Some of these trans-historical positions seem somewhat ambiguous. For example, Petrovic (1963) sees alienation as an estrangement from human possibilities, which presumably would be trans-historical, but shaped by historical contexts. Allen & Boyle (2011) state that potentialities distinguish us from other creatures, the greatest of which is the ability to remodel ourselves and society. Byron (2016) makes a more concrete distinction between essentialism and essence, both of which are required to understand human nature. Essentialism is that aspect of humans, true across all human history, which allows them to freely and consciously produce objects to serve not only themselves but others, with essence being their adaptation to their material circumstances, which are regionally unique and historically changing. It is their imaginative and creative labouring capacities and their need to labour (Byron, 2016). Ideally, such conscious, self-directed activity not only fulfills the needs of the individual and others but it also brings a sense of satisfaction and joy, and is the basis for a healthy and happy life (Raekstad, 2015). At the same time, human beings, through creative labour and the production of objects, not only bring out something distinctive for the benefit of the society in which they live, but by doing so affirm their own uniqueness and individuality. Individuality and social relationships are not opposites but instead complimentary and nurturing aspects of a singular process.

Conversely, it is the thwarting and coercion of free and conscious labouring that results in alienation in the worker, for not only is the product of their labour appropriated by the employer, a theft of creativity and individual expression, but the way in which the product is manufactured (whatever it may be) itself represents a loss of freedom. Working now only to exchange the commodity of their labour power for wages (having to endure the ignominy of surrendering the surplus value they themselves created to another), there is a consequent lack of growth in human qualities and a degradation of human relationships.

I agree with Byron (2016) that some form of essentialism makes the most sense of Marx's theory of alienation:

> Marx is not seeing people as a mere social product devoid of trans-historical qualities (i.e., he is not seeing humanity as a historicist Marxist would). If people were strictly social products, then there would be nothing enduring or stable to rebuff political economy against, because socio-political-economic relations would reflect the fluid nature of human beings. If one's essence is just a reflection of their social being, then there is nothing for their essence to be alienated from. Enduring (i.e., trans-historical) human nature is thus a necessary condition for alienation. (p. 388)

Nevertheless, as I have stated, the nature of this 'human nature' proposed by these writers seems oddly vague and unconvincing. 'Possibilities', 'potentialities,' and Byron's 'human's capacity to labour' that distinguishes humans from animals are surely merely descriptions of the activity of something more essential.[17]

In my opinion, Erich Fromm comes closer to addressing the nature of human essence when he describes human evolution beyond the needs and requirements of the animal levels due to the appearance of self-consciousness, and the resultant need to find meaning and purpose. A person's needs and drives are not merely connected to physiological requirements, but now also to the human condition itself (Matthews, 2019). Fromm (1955) writes that

[17] Still, I see potential in some of these attempts at identifying essence. It is instructive that the notion of possibilities as being the true nature of a human being is the way in which some writers describe consciousness. Discussing the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, biologist Rupert Sheldrake (2012) points out that every experiential moment involves prehensions that select aspects of the past and choose possibilities which determine potential futures. Potentiality and possibility are the nature of mind itself.

> inasmuch as man is human, the satisfaction of these instinctual needs is not sufficient to make him happy; they are not even sufficient to make him sane. The archimedic point of the specifically human dynamism lies in this uniqueness of the human situation; the understanding of man's psyche must be based on the analysis of man's needs stemming from the conditions of his existence. (pp. 31-32)

Fromm describes five aspects of the human condition (transcending the animal needs), which represent for him the essence of human nature, and which must be fulfilled for optimum mental health, irrespective of time and place. These include relatedness, creativity, rootedness and a sense of belonging, a sense of identity, and an orientation or framework through which people make sense of the world (Fromm, 1955). Fromm believed that under capitalist modes of production all these conditions of existence, the essence of being human, are undermined to a greater or lesser degree, and that as a consequence various forms of psychological distress result (Matthews, 2019). We have seen how each of these conditions are thwarted to some extent within the actual working life of modern people. The systemic glorification of individuality, the creation of class society through the division of labour, and the subsequent commodification of people and their lives, deprive them of meaning and purpose, and foster disconnection with themselves and others. Creativity is extinguished in favour of the pursuit of constructed needs and desires. Identity is abstracted from the bodily and spiritual connections that we naturally have with nature, with false identities replacing them that are driven by dissatisfaction and feelings of unworthiness. Nature is viewed as a dead resource good only for the promotion of capital flow and people become disconnected from it, from others, and from themselves.

While I agree with Fromm in many respects, I want to go beyond his five conditions of existence to argue (an argument explicated more fully in Chapter Four of this dissertation) that ultimately the essence or intrinsic nature of a human being, and indeed of all 'things', is consciousness itself and that a fundamental source of alienation that percolates up into all levels of human experience is an ignorance and concealment of the experience of consciousness per se. There are many philosophical traditions that espouse the idea of a natural, intrinsic, and pristine state of consciousness existing as the essence of reality. In this regard, I am personally most familiar with the Buddhist notion of Buddha-nature and the Advaita Vedantist's *Brahman*. These are not the experience of some extraordinary state: in Zen Buddhism Buddha nature is known as 'ordinary mind' because it is always present with us, accessible and available to all. And

although it is a priori to the contents of experience, it nevertheless generates our subjective realizations of intention, value, creativity, choice and, indeed, potentialities and possibilities. Nevertheless, it is hidden by the belief in a separate self, an ego, a construction of identity based on consciousness of existence (what Fromm calls self-consciousness) and which takes itself to be what it is not, an isolated and self-sufficient entity. While I agree with Fromm (1955) that meaning-making, identity formation, and the other conditions of existence can be an existential response to the presence of the egoic emergent self-consciousness, with its fear of death and other varieties of mental distress that may emerge from it, I also think that these same aspects of the human condition can arise in connection to the realization of the fact of consciousness itself, resulting in vastly different, life-affirming, and liberating ways of being. Furthermore, the obscuration of the ubiquity of consciousness within the natural world, especially through our society's adoption of a capitalism that promotes the egoic imperatives of separation, individuality, and an ideology of mechanism and determinism, may in fact be the ultimate source of estrangement from nature and from others (again, this theme is developed in Chapter Four). This deadening philosophical materialism generates a bankrupt moral materialism. Here I use the latter word, materialism, in the sense of a value system. Materialist values and goals are concerned with wealth, possessions, image, and status, and they tend to conflict with more humanistic, or even spiritual, values of concern with the well-being of others, and perhaps one's own personal and spiritual growth (Kasser, 2016). On the one hand, one can be a materialist in the Marxist sense and not embrace materialist values. Capitalism and neoliberalism, on the other hand, emphatically encourage the development of materialist values, even in the guise of spiritual values. In other words, it is a spiritual alienation that is the source of much of modernity's problems in living, much of it perpetuated by capitalism's adoption of an impoverished, spiritless materialism. In this sense, mental distress is capitalism's premier product.

1.12. Alienation and Mental Health

The concept of alienation is a lens through which to see and understand the individual and social effects of working conditions that separate workers from what they produce and the circumstances under which they produce it. By estranging workers from the creativity and potential for expression through work, along with the associated sense of purpose and meaning that may come from it, alienation sets up the conditions for both physical and mental health issues, "wasting not only blood and flesh, but also nerves

and brains" (Marx, 2018, Vol. 3, Chapter 5, Section 2, para. 2). Seeman (1983) makes the point that not only does the sense of powerlessness and despair from alienation affect health in multiple ways but it may also even affect recuperation from disease, one result of which, ironically, is the construction of 'helping' industries and techniques to get people back to work (see Chapter Three of this dissertation). Furthermore, doubly ironically, schooling and other educational institutions, that is, institutions set up to enculturate citizens into the given society's ways of life, are set up to getting people into work in the first place. Hence, alienation that affects physical and mental health afflicts all learners, from children to adults, in all educational institutions, including home, just as much as in workplaces. Alienation has become a normalized way of life for all, outside and inside the workforce. We are seeing most acutely now, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the interconnected societal phenomenon of alienation as we witness the rise of mental health problems, not just amongst workers but also amongst school children and students in post-secondary institutions (Deighton et al., 2019).

The proposition that alienating conditions generate mental health distress for workers is reflected in a broad range of work-related areas which, to give a few examples, show that 30% of short- and long-term disability claims made in Canada are due to mental health issues;[18] only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged at work;[19] 37% of people do not believe their work makes any contribution to the world (Graeber, 2018); income inequality leads to lower social cohesion, and to lowered health status (Coburn, 2000; Muntaner & Lynch, 1999; Scambler & Higgs, 2001; Wilkinson, Pickett, & Reich, 2009); and that lack of control at work leads to adverse health outcomes, like depression or anxiety (Marmot & Bell, 2010).[20]

However, there is very little in the literature which specifically makes the connection between alienation and mental health in particular (Crinson & Yuill, 2008). For example, within the field of counselling psychology, which has traditionally advocated for the importance of the inter-connection between mind, body, and environments, there are no references to alienation theory (Roberts, 2015). This is unusual (although as we shall in Chapter Three, not surprising) as Marx's approach to

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[18] Mental Health Commission of Canada: https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace

[19] https://news.gallup.com/poll/165269/worldwide-employees-engaged-work.aspx

[20] See Johann Hari's "Big Think" talk on this topic (and his interesting solution to lack of control at work): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0tgMubFqd8

human beings, illustrated by his conception of alienation, was fundamentally integral and holistic. His theory provided practical and potentially empirically supported examples of how people's workplace relations might impact on their health. Rejecting the idealism of Hegel, he placed human beings "back into a living sensuous historical and material world" (Crinson & Yuill, 2011, p. 129). Furthermore, Marx was careful not to espouse simple reductionisms, neither downplaying the role of individuals in favour of society, nor conversely, privileging individuals over society. As a result, Marx's notion of alienation is able to provide a contextual theory for the development of mental health issues in individuals depending on historical and socio-economic circumstances. As I have discussed, alienation is not merely the existence of conditions under which capitalism functions; it is concurrently a profoundly socio-psychological phenomena, with potential effects in any area of a person's life. A person's activity in any domain of life, whether it is family, religion, politics, or leisure, becomes as deformed, and as potentially unhealthy, as their working life (Ollman, 1977). Practically speaking, alienation emerges from and encourages a systemically imposed self-obsessed individualism, along with a severing of real human relationships. These are inter-connected and have far-reaching negative effects not only within and between human beings, but also in our interactions with, and care and appreciation of, the natural world.

Clearly, then, alienation can have impacts on the mental health of individuals within all spheres of life. Individually and relationally, people become fragmented because the workplace robs them of their creative expressions of labour, leaving them with no control or power, and treats them like robotized appendages of machines. Under these conditions of life, it is unsurprising that alienation may lead to a multitude of mental health concerns affecting all other areas of life. In turn, these areas of life which include our private lives at all levels - our characters, our interests, our inadequacies, and even our search for meaning - are themselves commodified and sold back to us in the marketplace (Roberts, 2015).

1.13. Chapter Summary

This chapter I have attempted to explore the notion of alienation as it was originally conceptualized by Karl Marx. Alienation is primarily the result of the conditions of labour relations within capitalist workplaces. Marx thought, along with Hegel and others, that labour was an 'essential' human activity, vital to what it means to be a

human being in the world, and that it was an essential means to creatively express our essence objectively, for our own sake and, just as importantly, for the sake of others. Alienation is a state that arises historically within capitalist workplaces when the objects and value produced by one class of individuals, the workers, are appropriated by another class, the employers, transforming what should be a creative and self-fulfilling endeavour into one which is oppositional and hostile to the worker. Thus, “economic forces have dissolved communal bonds with the result that individuals are atomised, and economic forces take on a life of their own and obey their own objective laws” (Sayers, 2011, p. 82). Consequently, I have argued that since social relationships are essential to the formation of fully flourishing and functioning human individuals, alienation not only adversely affects the individual on a deep personal level, but also eradicates their authentic relationships with others, both at work and outside of the workplace. Marx did not develop an actual psychology of alienation (Rubinštejn & Blakeley, 1987), but it is clear in his use of terms and phrases like ‘idiocy’, ‘cretinism’, ‘ruins his mind’, ‘unhappy’, ‘denies himself’ and others, that there is a unmistakable psychological component to his thought around its effects. Despite flawed criticism that they ignore the socio-historical contexts and causes of alienation, other non-Marxist and neo-Marxist thinkers have offered accounts of the actual lived experiences of alienation in the lives of people. This chapter looked at Seeman’s and Fromm’s analyses in particular. I argued that if there exists the presence of Seeman’s conditions, or if, on the other hand, Fromm’s conditions were not met to a greater or lesser extent, then there is a good probability that mental health issues, as we understand them today, would arise. Indeed, since work and the workplace are the dominant domains for living in the modern world, affecting almost every area of our lives and relationships, then it would be negligent to fail to explore the capitalist workplace as a primary source of psychological distress. I have attempted to demonstrate from the broad conceptual framework that Marx provides how alienation manifests in people’s lives and adversely impacts them in various ways both individually and relationally.

Finally, I have suggested that not only must workplace arrangements, and by extension, all learning environments, be transformed if there is to be a movement toward an ‘unalienated’ state (whatever that might be) but that there must be a new appreciation of the fundamental role that consciousness itself plays in the attainment of self-realized and unalienated states of being. There is both an individual component to change and a

societal component, and the one cannot be reduced to the other despite their intimate interconnection. Considering my position that the self and the source of the activities of the self are the experience of consciousness itself, I agree with Sayers (2011) when he comments that

> Marxism often presents itself as a purely social philosophy. The self is portrayed as a merely social creation. Marxists often seem to imply that social change alone will be sufficient to transform and realise the self – as though 'after the revolution' all conflicts between self and society will automatically be resolved without any action on the part of the individual being required. This is untenable, as the existential account quite rightly insists (Sartre, 1960). In short, there is an individual, subjective dimension to alienation and its overcoming. Will and choice are necessary. But they are not sufficient. The self must also be able to express itself, to realise its will and objectify itself. In doing so it comes up against existing objective conditions, and these may either facilitate its expression or hinder it. In this way there is an objective dimension to alienation, and its overcoming requires the existence of specific objective social conditions. (p. 8)

Recognizing that the experience of alienation in the workplace is a prominent factor for the development of mental distress, it is incumbent upon helping professions, like counselling psychology and social services agencies, to engage with the workplace and the inequality that exists there if they truly desire to address social justice within their practices. As I will discuss in the next chapter, these professions have worked hard to find ways to oppose discrimination of marginalized persons and to problematize race and gender issues within society; however, they have ignored class, which is based on systemic inequality within capitalist workplaces and social institutions. They do this at their peril, however. This is not to imply that systemic changes in the workplace resulting in democratic forms of ownership and distribution would instantaneously eradicate the intersectional issues of, for example, sexism and racism, but it is to re-introduce the necessity of a class critique in order to fully tackle such discriminatory practices (Greene, 2011). Thus, all helping professions, including schooling and counselling psychology, must provide a critique of capitalism if they are serious about social justice, and the alleviation of discriminatory practices and psychological distress in all its forms. My intention in the following chapter is to use counselling psychology - my own professional field - as a close-at-hand example to illustrate the lack of serious critique of capitalism, as shown in the field's uptake of the issues of social justice. In Chapter Two I will first explore a history and account of counselling psychology's engagement with social justice issues, with a particular view to clarifying what social justice means to the

profession and in what ways concepts of justice need to expand to effectively achieve the profession's objectives in this regard. I will then suggest that although the profession has correctly engaged with issues of racism, sexism, ageism, and other discriminatory practices, there has been a lack of articulation of the necessary philosophical assumptions that inform these concerns. In light of the appearance of alienation within workplaces due to capitalist relations of production and the classes formed as a result, I suggest that a complete analysis of social justice concerns requires an inquiry into class. I propose that this would provide the counselling profession with its philosophical basis for social justice work, comparing this briefly with the neoliberalism that seems to, in actuality, be the unspoken philosophical grounding of most psychological practices. Again, just as a reminder to the reader, I would maintain that the analysis I will be giving for the counselling field in the next chapter broadly applies equally to all helping and teaching professions.

“We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art, the art of words.”

Ursula K. Le Guin

Chapter 2: Counselling Psychology and Social Justice

2.1. Chapter Introduction

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that all of the modern helping professions, from doctors, to teachers, to educators of all varieties, increasingly employ relationship and technical skills drawn from psychology to assist those seeking their help. The field of counselling psychology, therefore, provides a fertile exemplar for an exploration of the ways in which the helping professions in general have engaged with issues involving social justice. Counselling psychology has a richly expansive and trans-disciplinary history and character, drawing from many different branches of the psychology family of disciplines (Bedi et al., 2011). Moreover, although it originated in the United States, counselling psychology has a particularly unique history in Canada, connecting to both the professional psychology traditions of the United States and to the educational counselling focus of Canada (Bedi et al., 2011; Sinacore et al., 2011; Sinacore, 2011). It is instructive that Canadian doctoral counselling psychology programs are located within faculties of education (Bedi et al., 2011). Canadian practitioners of counselling share a specific and important set of skills and competencies that differentiate it from other related disciplines like clinical psychology or experimental psychology and, in many ways, from the counselling psychology practices of the United States. Two of the most significant differences has been its historic emphasis on positive psychology, that is, on highlighting client strengths and resources, and on the importance of cultural diversity when considering client concerns (Haverkamp, Robertson, Cairns, & Bedi, 2011). Despite its strong ties to U.S. trends, counselling psychology in Canada reflects the country's unique multicultural make-up and the complex diversity therein. Indeed, the profession's emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism reflects some of the stated ideals of the Canadian nation state itself. Canada has developed, rightly or wrongly, an international reputation for toleration, diversity, and compassion both toward its own citizens but also to those arriving to Canada (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015). In fact, it has been noted that Canadian ethnic diversity is expanding due to an increase of immigration to Canada as well as an Aboriginal population that is growing at a faster rate than the total population (Young & Lalande, 2011). Through policy setting and legislation, Canada is recognised as promoting cultural pluralism and restoring the rights of Aboriginal peoples (Collins & Arthur, 2010). Some examples of leading Canadian legislation driving forward policies

that establish, protect, and promote diversity, equality, women's rights, and social justice have been: the *Bill of Rights*, later replaced in 1982 by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; the *Multicultural Policy* of 1971, replaced by the *Official Multicultural Act* of 1988 which emphasized civic participation, and the advancement of justice on behalf of all ethnic groups; the *Employment Equity Act* of 1986 which attempted to remedy systemic discrimination against women and minorities; the *Official Languages Act* of 1969; the *Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework*; and the 1976 *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015).

Nevertheless, despite these advances in legislative policy promoting the establishment of a just society, Canada still suffers from problematic and disturbing abuses of power, injustice, and inequality. These include our quite high rates of poverty, impacting in particular single mothers and their children, among first-world nations; inequalities in wealth distribution, reflecting the situation in global terms (Kottasová, 2018); an ever increasing rate of homelessness (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015); and continued discrimination and abuses of Indigenous rights particularly related to violations of land rights. It is, therefore, within this mix of common concerns found globally, and the distinctiveness of particular Canadian cultural, societal, and economic contexts, with both its successes and failures, that counselling psychology has developed in Canada, all the while advocating for social justice within its domains of practice. In this chapter I will discuss counselling psychology's historic and current relationship to the practices of social justice, and explore areas where the profession could expand its present understanding of its role by arguing that a responsible social justice stance must problematize the alienation found in unequal, oppressive, and undemocratic workplace arrangements. I also explore Thompson & Shermis's (2004) critique that the inclusion of an engagement with social justice issues appears to lack an explicit philosophical base. I introduce the observation that, in fact, the profession is rooted philosophically in capitalism and neoliberalism both historically and in practice, although this is to a large extent obscured. I begin with a description of counselling psychology's understanding of itself as a practice and then move on to examine its engagement with social justice.[21]

[21] I shift between the U.S. and Canada to provide examples of the development of social justice initiatives, while being mindful of differences. Unfortunately, peer-reviewed publication outlets for counselling psychologists in Canada are limited, and as a result most authors publish in the United States or internationally, which tends to hide the presence and vitality of Canadian counselling psychology (Sinacore, 2011). Nevertheless, these difficulties do not affect the principal direction of my argument.

2.2. Definition of Counselling Psychology

The increasing diversity in the Canadian population brings a variety of distinct cultures to Canada and the counselling profession must provide culturally appropriate services to meet diverse needs. The different varieties of cultural expression found within Western countries requires the attention of counselling practitioners, especially as contextual factors are known to be crucial to understanding client problems and as our appreciation of the multifaceted personal and individual expression of culture are acknowledged (Collins & Arthur, 2010).

As mentioned previously, there are two key elements that have distinguished Canadian counselling psychology from other forms of psychology and, indeed, from practices found in the United States. These elements are its focus on positive psychology and the promotion of diversity (Young & Lalande, 2011), and thus any definition of counselling psychology has attempted to reflect and promote these values. A formal definition of what counselling psychology entails was finally given in 2009 by the Section of Counselling Psychology of the Canadian Psychological Association and it is worthwhile quoting most of it:

> Counselling psychology is a broad specialization within professional psychology concerned with using psychological principles to enhance and promote the positive growth, well being, and mental health of individuals, families, groups, and the broader community. Counselling psychologists bring a collaborative, developmental, multicultural, and wellness perspective to their research and practice…In addition to remediation, counselling psychologists engage in prevention, psychoeducation and advocacy…Counselling psychology adheres to an integrated set of core values: (a) counselling psychologists view individuals as agents of their own change and regard an individual's pre-existing strengths and resourcefulness and the therapeutic relationship as central mechanisms of change; (b) the counselling psychology approach to assessment, diagnosis, and case conceptualisation is holistic and client-centred; and it directs attention to social context and culture when considering internal factors, individual differences, and familial/systemic influences; and (c) the counselling process is pursued with sensitivity to diverse sociocultural factors unique to each individual…[C]ounselling psychologists conduct research in a wide range of areas, including those of the counselling relationship and other psychotherapeutic processes, the multicultural dimensions of psychology, and the roles of work and mental health in optimal functioning. Canadian counselling psychologists are especially concerned with culturally appropriate methods suitable for investigating both emic and etic perspectives on human behaviour, and promote the use of research methods drawn from diverse epistemological perspectives,

> including innovative developments in qualitative and quantitative research. (Canadian Psychological Association, 2009)

Within this definition counselling psychology is, on the one hand, conceptualized as promoting wellness, psycho-education, illness prevention, and remediation of client distresses (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014), all reflections of its 'positive' psychological approach. Additionally, on the other hand, these areas of concern are contextualized within social and cultural spheres with a recognition that barriers within these domains may prevent healthy individual functioning, however defined. This aspect of the definition anticipates, while not specifically identifying, an engagement with social justice within counselling's sphere of practice.

To further emphasize social context, a special issue of the journal *Canadian Psychology* published in 2011, indicated that Canadian counselling psychology is especially sensitive to diversity, social justice, and advocacy, as well as a commitment to human development across the life span, while focusing on wellness and prevention (Sinacore, 2011). Certainly, in conceptual and theoretical terms at least, the profession has been concerned with engaging with major societal issues and changes, and with addressing the needs of individuals whose lives are affected by those changes (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Sinacore, 2011).

2.3. Social Context as an Invitation to Social Justice Perspectives

Recognizing that currently one in five Canadians experience severe psychological distress, with one in ten people struggling with an actual mental disorder, there is substantial evidence that inequalities in the social and economic position of different groups within a population determine the health status of those groups to the extent that the greater the inequity the poorer the health of the population. Consequently, attention needs to focus on the social grounding of health to prevent mental health issues within populations (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015). Such an analysis shifts the scope of counselling practice from a rudimentary, perhaps even neutral, awareness of, and sensitivity to, social and cultural contexts to an active encouragement of a more purposeful engagement with the inequities within society that impact people's health, and promotes a more definitive positioning of social justice within the profession as a primary focus of a counsellor's scope of practice. To this end, for example, the Mental Health Commission of Canada produced a strategy document *Toward Recovery*

& Well Being: A Framework for a Mental Health Strategy for Canada (2009) designed to answer the lack of services provided to Indigenous peoples, immigrants, the poor, sexual and religious minorities, differently abled people, and people who experience social violence, and to acknowledge that mental health must be conceptualized within cultural contexts (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015). Here engagement with social justice within the profession is seen as an attempt to recognize the role that environmental conditions play in the development of mental distress within marginalized individuals and groups and to focus on social contexts to properly discern the cause, prevention, and solution to distress. Specifically, these perspectives not only acknowledge the social determinants of distress but also advocate for activity that seeks to end, or at least reduce, the indignity and stress of poverty, in addition to other major social sources of stress like discrimination, exploitation, and prejudices (Albee, 2000).

2.4. Counselling Psychology, Politics, and Scope of Practice

The place of social justice within the domain of practice for counselling psychologists has been given more attention in recent years, both in Canada and in the United States (Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010; Ratts, 2011). These discourses have been influenced by voices within and outside the counselling psychology field, especially from the communitarian psychology, feminist psychology, and critical pedagogy approaches (Palmer & Parish, 2008).[22] Predictably, there have also been a range of opinions regarding the meaning of social justice within the field, with the result that there has been no definitive direction on how it might be implemented within a counsellor's scope of practice. Moreover, it is apparent that in some quarters there is still some hesitation to acknowledge its importance as a key core value within the discipline. As described previously, Canadian counselling has always considered issues of equality and equity within its purview. Nevertheless, recent appeals for a more prominent role for social justice concerns (Sinacore, 2011) has stimulated debate and some opposition (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014). Since counselling psychology is concerned with the well-being of individuals and groups within specific cultural and social environments, it is generally recognized that counselling psychologists have a professional responsibility to

[22] Naturally, community psychology has offered rich perspectives on the social context of psychological issues (Bostock & Smail, 1999; Fox, 2008; Prilleltensky, 1997; Prilleltensky, 2003; Smail, 1994; Smail, 2001). For a comprehensive summary of feminist approaches see: Brown, L. S., & Ballou, M. (Eds.). (1994). *Personality and Psychopathology: Feminist Reappraisals.* New York: The Guilford Press.

address systemic and social change by engaging with practices that actively oppose the oppression of individuals or groups.

However, there are those who think that taking on the mantle of social justice is beyond the appropriate mandate for a counsellor. Furthermore, there are ongoing questions regarding how a practice focused on social justice would be conducted, what models would be appropriate, and whether there exists any relevant research that supports the implementation of a social justice approach in the lives of clients (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014). Indeed, an example of this hesitation to position the profession within a social justice framework can be found in the definition of counselling psychology given above; for, although social justice is implied in its call to advocate on behalf of clients and to consider social and cultural contexts of a person's complaints, the term 'social justice' itself is not specifically used. There are passing references to 'familial/systemic' contexts, to 'socio-cultural considerations', and to 'advocacy', but there is no explicit call for social justice, and what that may look like. This can be considered a 'pushing aside' or 'forgetting', an omission that only encourages the sense that social justice is still not a central value for Canadian practitioners (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014). Young and Lalande (2011) explain, in a somewhat circular and ambiguous manner, that although it is important to address client concerns within the context of consideration given to social understanding and equality, "the challenge for counselling psychology is not to get mired in the political arguments of the left or the right that may come with the social justice territory" but that instead "counselling psychology in Canada has to find the conceptual and methodological grounding for the principles of liberty and equality that undergird social justice" (Young & Lalande, 2011, p. 252). Kennedy and Arthur (2012) state plainly, however, what is implicit in this critique: that it is those on the political left who advocate for the primacy of social justice and that often the values of the left conflict with the values of more conservative practitioners. Accordingly,

> advocating for increased funding to support homeless individuals may not fit with psychologists' conservative political positions. Further, advocating for marriage equality for all members of society may not be compatible with some psychologists' religious beliefs about sexual/affectional orientation. Thus, questions have been raised about whether counselling psychologists should instead be left to engage in social action in whatever ways are compatible with their own politics and values. (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014, p. 195)

It is, of course, crucial to acknowledge and respect the diversity of opinion regarding philosophical and moral differences within the counselling profession, differences which will probably not be resolved any time soon (Lichtenberg, 2017).

Nevertheless, if we recognize that persons' lives and experiences are socially mediated and inter-connected, then I argue that it is professionally negligent to ignore social, contextual, and environmental factors that cause distress in their lives due to a reluctance to engage with areas which might challenge personal conservative values. Furthermore, counselling psychology is inherently political and, therefore, to refuse to engage with social justice issues, or to practice from a more individualistic or conservative position, is still a political act. Therefore, I agree with Parker (2007) when he points out that not only is the field of psychology in general a privileged domain where class, gender, and racial representation by definition predisposes the profession to a conservative position, but that the structural requirements for obtaining tenure and funding, along with the obligations to publish in order to maintain and further career paths, all conspire to avoid controversy and especially views which are seen to represent left-wing political positions. In this way, contextual and environmental factors are ignored in favour of a more individualized psychology.

One way in which social justice has been enacted within counselling has been to emphasize multiculturalism, with the intent of not only raising awareness and knowledge around diversity, but to specifically encourage the development of multicultural competencies and skills among counselling practitioners.

2.5. Multiculturalism: The Fourth Wave Approaches to Social Justice

As noted earlier, Canada's counselling psychology practices have a historic connection to those of the United States, and each country has emphasized the importance of addressing multiculturalism as a vital consideration in recognizing the role of social justice in pedagogy and practice. The multicultural movement within counselling psychology has been designated the 'fourth-wave' in psychology (after the psychoanalytic, behavioural, and humanistic/existential waves), driven by a recognition of the growing multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual society in which we live (Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992).

There were a number of pressing reasons why historically, particularly in the United States, multicultural competencies were beginning to be seen as important for the mental health professional. These included: 1) increasing diversification based on immigration; the increasing aging population; and higher birth rates for Asian and Latino cultural groups; 2) research models often concentrated inordinately on deficit models for analysis which stigmatized marginalized groups; 3) counsellor training had been mono-cultural, with students very often receiving at best one course in multiculturalism (Arredondo, 1999). Furthermore, the training that was given to students was based on very narrow and particular ways of seeing the world, namely, White patriarchal culture (Katz, 1985; Strickland, 2000). It was increasingly recognized that models taught to students were monocultural and individualistic, with 'normal' behaviour described in the image of their creators, and with those behaviours identified outside these norms labelled deficient in some way (Arredondo, 1999).

2.6. A Brief History of Multiculturalism

The emphasis on multicultural considerations as representative of social justice concerns and how these could be reflected in counsellor practice began in the United States (influencing the development of counselling approaches in Canada also) during the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). The need to develop and articulate multicultural competencies both in research and in graduate training programs grew in the 1970s onward (Sue et al., 1992), specifically addressing, among other issues, the scientific racism espoused by some psychologists (an example of which was the propagation of the IQ test[23] within psychology and then into the culture) and the rampant discrimination against minorities.

Based on the work of Derald Wing Sue, Patricia Arredondo, and Rod McDavis (Arredondo, 1999) documents were constructed in 1992 and 1996 which outlined the case for the need of multiculturalism within the profession, and the necessity for the development of appropriate multicultural competencies. It was argued that all counselling is cross-cultural; that it occurs within the parameters of institutional and societal biases and norms; that the counselling relationship is most often between a

[23] Kendi (2019) argues that, for example, standardized testing used to measure aptitude and intelligence is inherently discriminatory and degrading, and falsely perpetuates the racist notion of black intellectual inferiority via the so-called "academic-achievement gap".

White counsellor and a client of ethnic racial minority status; that often these clients are the most marginalized and those to whom the counsellor is least qualified to assist; and, finally, that counselling is a culture-bound profession (Arredondo, 1999). Although there were objections to the narrow meaning of the term multicultural because it tended to only emphasize race and ethnicity (Collins & Arthur, 2010), for those advocating multiculturalism, however, the movement was inclusive of all aspects of personal and cultural identity (Arredondo, 1999). It aligned directly with opposition to all social and individual oppression, thus establishing itself inside a social justice agenda since, from the multicultural perspective, social justice is concerned with fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment for individuals and groups of people, marginalized and disempowered due to their immigration, racial, ethnic, age, socioeconomic, religious heritage, physical ability, or sexual orientation status (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007). For Sue and his colleagues, the term multicultural was both expansive and, at the same time, inclusive. That is, they felt that although there was a recognition that multiculturalism could be understood to address only racial and ethnic groups identified as oppressed (e.g. African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanics and Latinos), the term could equally cover race, class, religion, sex, age, and would address the concerns of other special populations (Sue et al., 1992). While the endeavour to make the definition of multiculturalism as inclusive as possible resulted in somewhat broad characterizations that recognized the differences between groups without comparing them as better or worse than each other, and that acknowledged the validity of their difference perspectives on life (Pieterse et. al., 2009), these attempts, nevertheless, lacked specificity. Still, in response to objections that such all-embracing definitions robbed the name of its power and would ironically encourage a corresponding inattentiveness to multicultural issues, Sue et. al., (1992) insisted that the ‘universal’ and ‘focused’ perspectives on multiculturalism were not mutually exclusive and that recognizing the cross-cultural nature of all counselling does not preclude a focus on specific ethnic minority issues. At the same time, they emphasized the necessity for the acquisition of appropriate competencies and skills applicable to minority clients.

Accordingly, one of the first responses to the importance of addressing the needs of a multicultural community was the push for multicultural competencies among

practitioners.[24] The definition of multicultural competency has been, and is still, concerned specifically with the way in which counsellors can engage effectively with diverse clients (Vera & Speight, 2003). Sue et. al. (1992) suggested three dimensions with which a counsellor must engage for the development of appropriate cultural competence: counsellor beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Specifically, an awareness of one's beliefs and attitudes means understanding one's own perspective on matters of race, ethnicity, and culture and how one's own group membership, and the privileges that may come from this, impact on discrimination and oppression. Knowledge refers to being cognizant of the worldviews of others, and their histories and stories of oppression, as well as their valued ways of experiencing the world. Skills refers to the ability to use traditional and non-traditional practices that are relevant to the population that would best bring about healing (Constantine et al., 2007; Sue et al., 1992).

It was not until 2002 that the American Psychological Association finally adopted a report, originally proposed by Derald Wing Sue in 1982, that outlined the standards for the knowledge and skills required of a qualified multicultural counsellor (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). This report known as the *Multicultural Guidelines on Education and Training, Research, Practice and Organizational Development for Psychologists*, along with other simultaneous initiatives within various divisions of the American Counseling Association, represented major steps forward in the promulgation of multicultural competencies within the counselling field (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). These competencies were seen by their authors as being firmly grounded within a social justice agenda because they make the case that socio-cultural context, environmental stressors of oppression, and historical forces all affect the health of racial and ethnic groups (Arredondo & Perez, 2003; Ivey & Collins, 2003).

2.7. The Fifth Wave

Despite the important benefits of the multicultural movement in the formation, research, and teaching of counselling psychology, there have been other critical voices which have advocated for an even broader conception of social justice as it may relate to the profession (Vera & Speight, 2003). Although multiculturalism is fundamentally

[24] For examples of models, approaches, and competencies see: Arredondo, 1999; Atkinson, Thompson, & Grant, 1993; Burnes & Manese, 2008; Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Ivey & Collins, 2003; LLera, Saleem, Roffman, & Dass-Brailsford, 2009; Quin, 2009.

concerned with social justice and has attempted to include more expansive views of what social justice might entail, a consideration of how social justice is defined opens up other areas of engagement.

Bell (2016), claims that social justice should be considered as both a goal, which is defined as the full and equitable participation of all groups within a society, and as a process, a democratic and participatory means by which change is accomplished, while relying on agency and collaboration to achieve such ends. She further goes on to describe the vision of the world that is socially just as a place wherein

> the distribution of resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure, recognized, and treated with respect. We envision a world in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities) and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others). Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, the environment, and the broader world in which we live. These are conditions we not only wish for ourselves but for all people in our interdependent global community. (p. 1)

This conception of social justice emphasizes the fair and equitable distribution of resources, with a focus on those who are disadvantaged as the primary concern, but leaves open the question of who is disadvantaged, and in what ways, and how this might be challenged. I have argued so far that workers within the structures of capitalist society are by definition living under conditions that are unjust since not only are they unable to be self-determining but they do not function within institutions or in relationships that are democratic and reflective of agency or social responsibility. In other words, I agree with Sue et al. (1992) that it is necessary to identify specific cultural groups and forms of discrimination or oppression, while at the same time recognizing cultural considerations more broadly; yet I propose that these considerations are plainly situated within the capitalist mode of production itself, and that an appreciation of racism or sexism, for example, cannot be separated from an analysis of the division of labour within society. I will expand on this point later on.

Historically, there have been many different approaches to, and definitions of, social justice. The Libertarian model of John Locke was based on the link between merit and liberty, wherein merit is the predictor of the acquisition of resources and, assuming there is an equal playing field for all, people would get what they deserve (Vera &

Speight, 2003). Thus, inequities could certainly still arise but they should not be a concern to society as long as opportunities were equal. Liberal reformist approaches to social justice, influenced principally by Rousseau, rejected meritocracy and affirmed that inequity cannot be merely accepted in society; consequently, the role of government, and of public policy, is to establish, maintain, and enforce equitable laws and social conditions through the protection of basic rights and the promotion of liberty and freedom of choice for all (Vera & Speight, 2003).

The communitarian approach to social justice proposes that it is the process of moving toward a fair and equitable society that is key, and not necessarily the distribution of resources themselves. The solution to inequities is not merely re-apportionment of wealth, but a transformation of the practices and processes that lead to unfair outcomes. Since a large portion of the population fall into categories that may be considered marginal (i.e. people of colour, the elderly, women, unemployed persons etc.), it is apparent that "issues of social justice are important for the statistical majority of the population, not just minority groups. Such a conceptualization of justice, then, is logically related to issues of multiculturalism and diversity" (Vera & Speight, 2003, pp. 260-261). This approach is the one that I find myself most attracted to; but even here, once again, despite the inclusiveness of the definition of those toward whom justice issues would apply, my view is that it must be broader still. For example, it is not just unemployed persons, but also employed persons, oppressed and alienated by class division within an unjust system, who should be the focus of social justice concerns. The acknowledgement of what might be characterized as a broad systemic category like employment would, nevertheless, have the concomitant effect of simultaneously addressing those more specific categories of discrimination and oppression. Again, I will address this more thoroughly later in this chapter.

Since it is recognized that context matters when addressing mental health issues, there have been many recent arguments made that, indeed, social justice is vital to the practice of counselling (Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010; Toporek, Kwan, & Williams, 2012; Vera & Speight, 2003). Contributions from critical psychology, feminist psychology and multicultural theorists have significantly influenced the argument that social justice have a more prominent role within counselling psychology (Palmer & Parish, 2008). As mentioned previously, multicultural awareness and the development of appropriate competencies has been particularly emphasized as the way forward to

address social justice within counselling practice. Others, however, have called for a broadening of how we understand social justice within the profession and have suggested different areas of engagement with it (Constantine et al., 2007; Goodman et al., 2004; Ivey & Collins, 2003; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Palmer & Parish, 2008; Vera & Speight, 2003). The expanded conception of social justice within counselling has been characterized as the 'fifth force' within the profession, although some have downplayed this characterization noting that the profession has always historically engaged with justice issues (Ratts, 2009). Nevertheless, Goodman et al. (2004), in a seminal article discussing the role of social justice in counselling, define

> the social justice work of counseling psychologists as scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination. Drawing on an ecological model of social analysis, we propose that social justice work occurs on three different levels: the micro level, including individuals and families; the meso level, including communities and organizations; and the macro level, including social structures, ideologies, and policies. (p. 795)

The broadening of social justice concerns into micro, meso, and macro levels has been reiterated by other writers using different language and schemas (see, for example, Prilleltensky, 2003). I believe these distinctions are useful ways to conceptualize social justice work. However, it is important to also see each level within the others, the micro within the macro for example, giving counsellors practicable and flexible options to effect change. This theme will be discussed further in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

Although some writers have emphasized that multicultural competencies are both necessary and sufficient responses to the call for broader social-political change (Arredondo & Perez, 2003), I agree with other writers who have moved beyond multiculturalism per se to focus on wider institutional oppression (Smith, Baluch, Bernabei, Robohm, & Sheehy, 2003). Accordingly, social justice has been conceptualized as a concern for the inequitable institutional, social, and political 'upstream' decisions, involving, for example, discrimination, unfair policies and practices around access to food and housing, and inadequate response to the needs of poor or disabled persons, all of which leads to the 'downstream' consequence of suffering in one form or another (Ali & Sichel, 2014). Consequently, this approach hopes to expose the pathologies of institutions and policies that perpetuate oppression and suffering in individuals, communities, and groups through engagement with social structures and

ideologies. Others have expanded the call for a broader view of social justice's role in counselling by focusing on principles of distributive justice, defined as equitable distribution of power and resources, with an emphasis on collaboration, and democratic and equal power and voice (Baluch, Pieterse, & Bolden, 2004).

These more expansive propositions of the extent counselling's mandate should address the sources of mental health concerns within social and cultural contexts have sometimes been drawn from the emancipatory communitarian psychological literature, most notably advocated by Isaac Prilleltensky (see, for example, Prilleltensky, 1997 & Prilleltensky, 2003). This approach proposes radical practices that are compassionate, involving both social obligation and mutual determination. Notably, 'emancipatory' refers to the necessity of liberation for all oppressed groups (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005). The implementation of social justice within counselling with an emphasis on advocacy and more proactive, preventative models of intervention dramatically transcends the use of traditional, individualistic approaches to client problems to embrace roles that include advocacy, outreach, prevention programming and psychoeducational interventions, community outreach, consulting, facilitating indigenous support networks, and public policy (Palmer & Parish, 2008).

Correspondingly, more expansive counsellor competencies have been suggested. Many have recognized that a more reflective understanding of social justice should mirror the broad concerns of society itself (Baluch et al., 2004). These concerns include exploring how the profession of counselling psychology can address issues of equitable distribution of power and resources, collaboration, democratic decision making processes, and encouragement of equality in power and voice and, in general, meaningfully consider expansive systemic inequities within both the profession of counselling and society (Baluch et al., 2004). Some scholars have suggested ways to address this in practical terms, most of which reflect more detailed expansions of Sue et al.'s focus on beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills (see, for example, Constantine et al.'s (2007) nine proposed competencies).

Going beyond the emphasis solely on multiculturalism, then, many theorists are now locating the parameters of social justice in counselling within a broad sociocultural framework and thus seek to oppose all forms of oppression, recognizing that these both cause and perpetuate psychological distress (Smith et al., 2003). So far, I have tried to

show the development of the focus and concerns of the social justice movement within the counselling profession and the way in which they have expanded, especially in recent years, to include a broad range of groupings and categories. Nevertheless, in the following sections I hope to explain why even these enlarged conceptions of social justice are insufficient. I propose that they lack a good philosophical foundation (at the very least these are not explicitly explicated) and that they fail to specifically critique the workplace, the one domain of persons' lives that is central to the creation and perpetuation of oppression, inequality, and undemocratic ways of being, since it is the organization of people's working lives which leads to alienation and the development of mental distress.

2.8. Critiques of Social Justice Conceptions

The approach of Goodman et al. (2004) emphasizes a broader focus on larger systemic changes in addressing mental health concerns. This conception is far more holistic in approach, not only in how mental health is contextualized but also in the manner in which mental health issues are tackled. They emphasize six main practical responses to this more comprehensive understanding of the role of social justice within the profession which include constant self-examination, power sharing, 'giving voice', consciousness raising, building on strengths, and giving clients the necessary tools for change (Goodman et al., 2004).

Nevertheless, even as these theories of how to conceptualize social justice, the competencies and practices required to engage with it, and how issues of social justice might be taught to graduate students in counselling psychology are useful and important, I contend they are noticeably disconnected from a wider philosophical foundation. As Thompson & Shermis (2004) argue, theories of social justice do not materialize spontaneously but instead are rooted in an underlying philosophical base. The philosophical base is missing in most conceptions of those who advocate for the importance of social justice within counselling psychology. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Indeed, as will be argued in Chapter Three, a failure to explicitly articulate a foundational philosophical basis for social justice work in any of the helping professions may in fact assist in perpetuating the very systems that the professions are ostensibly criticizing and attempting to correct. As theory is required to provide direction, rationality, and order to the practices of counselling psychologists, it is a meaningful

philosophical perspective that illumines and guides theory (Thompson & Shermis, 2004). Philosophical frameworks may be religious, political, humanistic, or reflect stances that emphasize pragmatism or utilitarianism, for example, but they should be clearly stated. Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson (1999) explain that

> indeed, it is not possible to have theory without philosophy, for at least two reasons. First, as Gödel proved in the field of mathematics, it is not possible to have a symbolic system that is not based on analytic assumptions and postulates that go beyond the reach of that symbolic system. You must start with postulates or assumptions, and, thus, theory is never enough. Second, in order to assess theoretical systems, there must be some rules of evidence or criteria for truth that allow to say that one statement or set of statements is better or truer than another. But these rules of evidence are necessarily preanalytic - they enable analysis, they are not the result of analysis. We can ignore philosophy only by mindlessly and implicitly assuming a philosophy, but it seems much better to own up to our assumptions consciously. (p. 16)

Philosophical assumptions may potentially generate theories of change, both individually and collectively, that challenge and upset power structures that are traditionally resistant to change or transformation. Let me now return to the material I covered in the previous chapter and consider it in terms of the current topic of discussion.

2.9. Alienation as a Manifestation of Capitalist Production and Class Division

I would argue that the notion of alienation, as outlined in Chapter One, provides a comprehensive philosophical foundation for an explication of theories and descriptions of social justice within counselling psychology. Indeed, alienation, particularly as generated within workplace environments or within institutions that train people for work (like schools, colleges, universities, technical schools, etc.), is the ultimate outcome within such settings in modern society because their organization is intrinsically oppressive and undemocratic. Marx's concept of alienation as originating from capitalist modes of production, and fueled by neoliberal sensibilities within the society at large, provides an expansive and theoretically pragmatic understanding of the ways in which mental distress may arise, while also hinting at solutions. Alienation for Marx, especially as outlined in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, manifests within both the intra- and inter-psychic realms as a split between the person and the realization of their fullest creative potential, and as a rupture between the person and others,

respectively. Whereas Marx saw human beings as ideally intimately connected to nature, a part of nature, and functioning holistically within nature, alienation is the rendering of this fundamental unity into two, with accompanying adverse psychological, physical, and social repercussions. The most indubitable example of this breach occurs within the capitalist mode of production wherein persons experience separation from their work environment, the product they produce, and, consequently, from themselves and others. The effect of these breaches are the stresses, anxieties, depressions, and more broadly, family and relationship issues that make up the majority of the work that counsellors encounter. Alienation occurs because the capitalist mode of production, based on class division, is in itself unjust: it is unequal, unequitable, discriminatory, oppressive, and fundamentally undemocratic. For example, in the often cited Oxfam briefing report of 2016[25] it was reported that the richest 1% of the world's population has accumulated more wealth than the rest of the global population combined, and that a mere 62 of the richest individuals in the world own as much as the poorest half of the global population, or some 3.6 billion people. In other words, the modern capitalist economies of the world function for the benefit of an increasingly small number of owners while the working classes are seeing less and less benefit and are increasingly living under precarious circumstances. A social justice critique, to be truly emancipatory, must consider class. I suggest that class division, created by workplace relations, represents the neglected sphere that has hidden within the calls for systemic change by recent analyses within counselling, but which, nevertheless, following trends in other scholarly thinking, has been dismissed as irrelevant or passé. Class's intersectionality with race provides a good example of why opposition to racism, an otherwise advocated perspective within counselling theory, must simultaneously consider class. I turn to this issue in the next section.

2.9.1. Class Division and Racism

Class divisions are based on the difference between those who create products and those who appropriate the wealth (the surplus) generated by those products. Class for Marx is not only a matter of where an individual is situated within a particular mode of production (Eagleton, 2018), but an indictment against the exploitation of unpaid labour

[25] See: https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp210-economy-one-percent-tax-havens-180116-en_0.pdf

within the workplace (Resnick & Wolff, 2013). Although it is useful to speak about class, in many circumstances, as merely the distinction between owners and workers, it is important to note that these classes are not the only ones in today's society. Indeed, contrary to popular belief, Marx himself recognized the existence of other social classes that could determine the movement of society, although he did think there were two main classes (Allen & Boyle, 2011). I am advocating a more nuanced understanding of class, one given by Resnick & Wolff (2013) who argue that class should be thought of as a verb rather than as a noun and that it "refers specifically to this economic process of producing and appropriating surplus or, as Marx puts it, unpaid labor" (p. 158). This conception of class does not necessarily entail who owns the means of production, whether it is the state or private individuals, or collections of individuals, nor does it focus on reified groupings of people. Class is a process that interacts in multiple ways with other non-class processes, with individuals functioning and creating identity and position within society through a multiplicity of both class and non-class processes, each determining and being determined by the others (Resnick & Wolff, 2013).

These class processes, analysed through a perspective on the effects of capital accumulation globally (Kandall, 1996), are the driving forces behind other forms of discrimination like sexism and racism (Reed, 2013), which have rightfully been a prominent concern for helping professions and for the counselling profession specifically. With respect to racism, for example, I call attention to the fact that the poorest half of the world's population come from countries that were the victims of historical plunder by colonial and imperialist powers that originated and perpetuated the slave trade and the theft of vast resources, leading both to the impoverishment of those countries and to the concurrent growth of capitalist power and wealth in the West (Kendi, 2019). Capital exploitation, both historical and present-day, is a hand-maiden of racism so that "capitalism is essentially racist; racism is essentially capitalist. They were birthed together from the same unnatural causes…" (Kendi, 2019, p. 163). Class is, as Eagleton (2018) says, "the wrong which keeps so many other kinds of wrong in business…[and] has a significance far beyond its own sphere" (p. 166).

The class division that lays at the heart of the capitalist mode of production can be seen to be, at the very least, if not the cause of racism and sexism, indispensable to its perpetuation. The class process is inextricably woven together with non-class processes, each nurturing the other, and together creating the economic, environmental,

discriminatory, and other harms experienced within our society (Resnick & Wolf, 2013; Schmitt, 1988).[26] Whereas it is imperative not to reduce race and gender to class (Bakhir, 2001), it is equally important not to conflate them for in doing so one ignores the issue of power relations (Navarro, 2004). The working class are all those, no matter what their occupation or, for that matter, their earnings, who sell their labour power to capital, caught within capital's all-pervasive authority and subjection, and are, as a result, stripped of any meaningful power or control (Eagleton, 2018). It is in the removal of power from people into the hands of a small elite that has historically generated racism and racist ideas up until modern times. Racism cannot be properly addressed without addressing capitalism and vice versa. Kendi (2019) argues that "the problem of race has always been at its core the problem of power, not the problem of immorality or ignorance". He goes on to say that

> race and racism are power constructs of the modern world. For roughly two hundred thousand years, before race and racism were constructed in the fifteenth century, humans saw color but did not group the colors into continental races, did not commonly attach negative and positive characteristics to those colors and rank the races to justify racial inequity, to reinforce race power and policy. Racism is not even six hundred years old. [Thus] in order to truly be antiracist, you also have to truly be anti-capitalist…and in order to truly be anti-capitalist, you have to be antiracist, because they're interrelated. (Interview with Democracy Now, 2019)

Particularly in recent years, many of the most expansive proposals for social justice within the profession of counselling psychology have appealed for opposition and transformation of systems, policies, and practices that oppress persons. These conceptions reflect the kind of just society, which Bell (2016) describes in the definition above, that emphasizes self-determination, development of full capacities, and the ability to interact in a democratic fashion, all of which result in individuals who are engaged in positive ways with themselves, each other, and the world. It is clear from the literature that this has meant addressing the inequities suffered by marginalized groups, which manifests as various everyday personal and institutional forms of racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of discriminatory practices.[27] Yet, class division, as primarily

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[26] See Willhelm (1980) for an account of some of the limitations orthodox Marxian theory has in relating racism to classism.

[27] Bannerji (2011) critiques the concept of intersectionality because it unnaturally separates three strands of social life (i.e. race, gender, & class) as actually experienced by persons and then attempts to put them back together in an aggregate manner. This has led to the obscuration of class in most recent analyses in favour of an emphasis on cultural discourse which leads to an impoverished 'identity' politics. Bannerji's analysis highlights both the inadequacies of social justice movements in general and, in our case, counselling's engagement with social justice specifically, with its emphasis on multiculturalism as as the extent of its social concern.

manifested in workplace arrangements, is generally ignored despite its importance as a vehicle for racist, sexist, and other discriminatory practices. A comprehensive and effective social analysis must recognize that “class cannot be genderless or cultureless, nor can culture be genderless and classless” (Bannerji, 2011, p. 51).

Class is also ignored despite being a potentially fruitful foundation upon which radical opposition could occur, a possibility that the dominant classes know only too well. In this respect I agree with Martha Giminez’s (2001) analysis that very often employers are able to wield their power so that they re-identify class related grievances as ‘raced’ or ‘gendered’, or both. Class becomes obscured even although it may be fundamental to a proper analysis of workplace dynamics and the functioning of power. Without simplistically reducing gender or racial oppression to class, class nevertheless is the power that often remains unnamed but which is the essence of the intersectionality of social relations (Giminez, 2001). Class, therefore, is not just another location of discriminatory practices by persons or institutions. Indeed, whereas sexism and racism are always evil, class, from a Marxist perspective, is the site of both oppression and emancipation, a possible gateway to the possibilities of social change (Gimenez, 2001).

It is therefore the acknowledgement of class division forged within capitalist relations of production within the workplace, and the inevitable alienation that results, that must, I argue, form the basis of counselling psychology’s grounding in social justice. When the literature calls for addressing systemic change, it is not generally advocating for the abolishment of capitalism, but rather for changes to institutions, policies, and practices which are seen to be discriminatory or inequitable in some manner. This critique is not to diminish such practices or concerns. Indeed, alienation theory gives more incentive for engaging with anti-discriminatory oppositions that bring about a better society. However, sole focus on these approaches alone can be likened to reformist movements within politics: although necessary and important, they do not address the structural inequities that fuel multiple social ills in the first place (Blakeley, 2019).

2.9.2. Modern Class Division and the Rise of Inequality

Discussion of class division has re-emerged within academic and popular writings, especially after the economic crash of 2008 when it became difficult to ignore.[28] Prior to this time, class had for the most part disappeared from various analyses simply because it seemed that after World War II there had been an improved living standard of the so-called lower- and middle-classes. Indeed, during the years between World War II and the 1970s there was not only a great increase in productivity within the Western nations but wages also rose concurrently (Blakeley, 2019). However, since the 1970s wages have become stagnant while productivity has continued to increase, all of which has resulted in an increase of inequality (Economic Policy Institute, 2019; Oxfam Briefing Paper, 2019; World Inequality Report, 2018) .[29] The reasons for this shift are multiple and complex. Some general trends have been identified, however. There were definitive changes occurring on both sides of the labor market (Wolff, 2012), starting especially in the 1970s. First, the demand for labour decreased due to the advent of computers across the manufacturing and service industries, an indication of a broader importance of technology within economies. Geopolitics and technology provided the opportunities for business to function from beyond borders (White, 2015), resulting in the phenomena of globalization. Second, the demand for labor decreased due to this increasing globalization and the result was the movement of industry, and hence jobs, to locations around the world where labour was far cheaper. Private sector jobs followed the trend of manufacturing jobs during the 1970s and 1980s, so that competitive advantages and increased profits were obtained by replacing higher-wage domestic workers with cheaper foreign workers (Wolff, 2012). Third, during this period of time women started to abandon the traditional roles society had dictated for them, usually involving unpaid labour in the home, and started to seek out full-time paid employment, which caused a huge influx in the supply of labour within the market. Finally, in the United States at least,

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[28] Since the economic crash of 2008 many have realized that class relations are alive and well. See: Blakeley, G. (2019, September 29). We were told capitalism had won. But now workers can take back control. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/29/no-alternative-capitalism-workers-take-back-control-class-politics

[29] The latest data available indicates that almost 50% of all global wages are earned by just 10% of workers whereas the lowest paid 50% earn only 6.4% of global pay. See: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_712234/lang--en/index.htm

there was an increase in immigration, particularly from Latin America, which again increased the labour market with workers, thus giving capitalists a source of cheap labour (Wolff, 2012). Other factors for the stagnation of wages was, and continues to be, the systematic underinvestment in education, pools of skilled labour, a vibrant network of suppliers, and strong infrastructure. At the same time, there was a decline in collective bargaining and a drop in union involvement (White, 2015).

The consequences of these massive shifts in the labour market not only impacted on the rising disparity between worker wages and increased productivity, resulting in massive profits for successful owners of business, but they also affected business's connections to communities. Technological innovation and computer advancement meant that capital knew no borders, thus weakening the traditional connections between local workers, their places of employment, and their communities. These socio-economic developments led to businesses in many cases abandoning the traditional sense of civic responsibility they might once have held, disengaging with the everyday lives of their employees, and withdrawing from local investment (Wolff, 2012). Alienation from community and the various forms of loneliness, social anxiety, and isolation that can arise as a result is, nevertheless, a prominent feature of capitalism and the neoliberal philosophy that fuels it (Sugarman, 2015).

2.10. Capitalism and Neoliberalism

These breaches in community and in relationships at all levels of society are a predictable result of capitalist economic practices but are also sustained by the political-ideological philosophy of neoliberalism which now dominates our modern era. Essentially, neoliberalism promotes an unregulated free market system where self-interest is best, and markets are the preferred route to fulfilling the self's interests. Ideally, the neoliberal state should be small; competition, inequality, and financial speculation signify the defining elements of the system. A competitive individuality is the essence of the sense of self of persons within such a society (Mason, 2015). Neoliberal ideas originated with Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises during the 1930s who effectively managed to conflate liberal democracy with the communism and fascism they both abhorred (Monbiot, 2017). Originally considered marginal, Hayek's views grew in influence so that by 1960 Hayek had discarded notions such as political freedom, universal rights, human equality and the redistribution of wealth. Ideas such as these

confined the freedoms of the rich and powerful, interfering with wealth creation, thus hampering the trickle-down effects to others. Hayek believed that for freedom to exist the majority of people should not be in charge of the society and its politics (Monbiot, 2017). It was the capitalist class, with all their riches and resources, that were considered the vanguards and protectors of the good society, and thus it was precisely through inequality, actively promoted and endorsed by the capitalist elite, that such a society would flourish. As a result, this meant that Hayek and his ever more popular neoliberal ideas opposed progressive taxation, free universal health care, the conservation and protection of natural resources, and endorsed the destruction of unions while supporting the spread of monopolies (Monbiot, 2017).

While Keynesian economics had dominated after the Second World War for a period of about 25 years, it was eventually replaced by neoliberalism after a stagnation occurred in the 1970s (Foster, 2019). By now neoliberalism was particularly connected to the rise of monopoly-finance capital; whereas the state's conventional role had been to oversee and protect social reproduction in all its forms, its role under neoliberalism was instead to encourage capitalist reproduction (Foster, 2019). These doctrines and practices became especially prominent as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan came to power during the 1970s and 1980s (Blakeley, 2019). Thatcher, for example, was a Hayek devotee and introduced large tax cuts for the rich, the destruction of trade unions, along with widespread deregulation, privatisation, and outsourcing of public services. She had intended to go so far as to dismantle the welfare state, privatize universal healthcare, and charge education fees, but was thwarted by her own party (Monbiot, 2017).

With the decimation of social securities and the transformation of the state into a conduit for free competition, monopoly power along with vast inequalities, have only increased (Foster, 2019). The impact of austerity politics, especially after the financial crash of 2008, has had devastating effects on the lives of the working classes, while making the capitalist class even richer than ever before (Blakeley, 2019). For example, a report from 2013 by the economist Emmanuel Saez (Saez, 2013) indicates that in the United States from 2009 to 2012, the years immediately after the financial crash of 2008 onward, there was an overall increase in the average real income of families, but that when the figures were broken down the gains were quite unequal, indicating that top 1%

incomes were close to full recovery while the bottom 99% incomes had barely begun to recover.

But apart from its objective political and economic effects in terms of the perpetuation of inequalities, neoliberalism constructs a certain particular sense of self and formulates a narrative of how that self should act in society, barely challenged by conventional institutions, including the psychological professions (Sugarman, 2015). Neoliberalism offers not merely a set of political ideas and economic relations, but also a narrative of personal identity and behaviour as competitors within the market. We are encouraged, and indeed trained, to view the world in terms of commodity exchange, with our success in this domain creating hierarchies of winners and losers. The market therefore becomes the measure of efficiency, the freer the better, and so all forms of regulation, planning, taxation, and collective movements like unions are viewed as impediments to the success and liberty of individuals within market society (Monbiot, 2017).

Thus, neoliberalism not only reverses the traditional relationship between the state and the market, affecting the objective position of people within society, but it also permeates their subjectivity so that people see themselves as not only consumers but the ‘consumed’, marketable products consisting of acquired skills “to be managed, maintained, developed, and treated as ventures in which to invest” (Sugarman, 2015, p. 104). Since the development of such an identity is an individual enterprise, shaped by individual choices, and unsupported by social supports formerly provided by the state and by community, the likelihood of what might be perceived as personal failure is all the more probable. The workplace, whatever form it takes, is an ideal and primary domain for both the development and the enactment of these neoliberal subjectivities, and is, therefore, an inevitable source for the emergence of alienation due to competition between individuals, and the inequities and inequalities that arise as a result. Within the capitalist workplace, equality is not a value that is prioritized; rather, it is equality of opportunity as actualized within market relations.

I pause here to consider again Baluch et al.’s (2004) assertion that counsellors must address themselves to the systemic inequities in both the profession and society in a meaningful fashion if they are to engage with social justice issues. Although I agree with the intent of this argument, it remains to be seen whether this can be done within

the domain of the profession itself because of its entanglement, both historically and in practice, with neoliberalism. I rather suspect that, since the philosophical basis for counselling's engagement with social justice is rarely made explicit, and that an analysis of alienation as defined by workplace relations is almost completely absent from discussions of mental health distress, neoliberalism is, in fact, the unspoken author of both these omissions. Despite the profession's good intentions, neoliberalism lurks as its philosophical background, preventing outright critiques of the undemocratic ways in which we live most of our lives. I explore this idea more in the next chapter, but first I would like to briefly describe what a democratic workplace might look like, one in which I believe the conditions for the development of problematic mental health issues would be greatly reduced.

2.11. Democratization of the Workplace

If counselling psychology is committed to social justice and to addressing inequality in social systems, it must address itself to the basic and fundamental inequality that exists in our places of work, influencing workers, unemployed people, those precariously employed, and those working for no pay (Swidler, 2018). As Richard Wolff, the Marxist economist, points out, we like to believe that we live in a society that is democratic and equal, and yet it is not because the workplace is not (with a few rare exceptions) a democratic domain. Most people work, for example, eight hours a day, five days a week for the best portions of their lives. In order to become employed, and then to remain employed, workers must agree to give up their usual democratic rights. They have no input into what they do or how they do it, as this is determined solely by the employer. They have no voice in decisions that are made within the business, the direction it might be taking, or its prospects for the future. The surplus value they create is not shared equally but instead goes to the owners. The employee has no say on the impact of their work within their local and wider communities, nor on its potential impact on issues that are pressing for our planet, like the current climate crisis (Wolff, 2012).

Remembering Bell's (2016) description of a socially just community as a place where people have a "sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, the environment, and the broader world in which we live," I argue that it is readily apparent that the modern day workplace, in most of its current forms, contravenes this standard. Whether we are looking at private

capitalisms (run by private individuals) or state capitalisms (like those found in the former Soviet Union) the inherently undemocratic systems of production within workplaces to a great extent frames the economic, political, and cultural relationships of the society, creating in turn their dynamics, tensions, and inequalities (Wolff, 2012). Inability to participate in workplace decision-making serves only to institutionalize lack of agency and powerlessness, and cultivates cultures of alienation, with the accompanying development of mental distress.

The helping professions must become advocates for the democratization of the workplace which involves the establishment of workers' self-directed enterprises (Wolff, 2012). These types of work arrangements involve a radical departure from capitalist modes of production in that the production, appropriation, and distribution of the surplus is a co-operative and equal enterprise wherein the producers and the appropriators of the surplus are the same people (Wolff, 2012). To the extent that capitalism's means of arranging the workplace is exploitative and undemocratic, the establishment of self-directed enterprises would nurture freedom and equality, with each worker having a full voice in the operation of the business. Such enterprises would have immediate impacts for people both individually and communally: workers would decide for themselves how to incorporate technological change, thereby addressing the long-standing problem of redundancy due to technological advances; workers could be given opportunities to rotate through a number of different job functions, thus helping to discourage burnout, disengagement, and boredom; and the practice of functioning democratically within the workplace would impact on the engagement with community and national issues and their politics, with the expectation that changes at the micro-level of work has ramifications for how politics is performed at the macro-level (Wolff, 2012).

Yet, consistent with Marx's philosophical affinity for the relationship of human beings with nature through labour, perhaps the most significant promise of workers' self-directed enterprises is their impact on environmental issues. As Wolff (2012) points out:

> First and foremost, workers live, play, and raise families in and around their sites of work. For them the costs of environmental degradation are a much more important and immediate consideration than for a small group of outside capitalist directors who have enough wealth to avoid living or working in places vulnerable to environmental degradation and its effects. The bottom-line objectives of private and state capitalists would be

> subordinated to environmental considerations in WSDEs' decisions. (How WSDE's Work, para. 27)

The shift in environmental responsibility with the implementation of workers' self-directed enterprises has, once again, radical impacts not only for the natural world, but also for racism, sexism, and other discriminatory practices under capitalist systems that subject poor people and others to the externalities of their profit-driven operations.[30] Consequently, I contend that the helping professions must turn their attention to the workplace, and its relations of production, if they are to impactfully fulfill their commitment to social justice within their domains of practice.[31]

2.12. Chapter Summary

Counselling psychology has made great efforts to align itself with, and advocate for, social justice and democracy at all levels of individuals' engagement with society. In this chapter I have tried to review some of the history of these pursuits by showing how this particular profession has attempted to embrace widening definitions of the notion of social justice. Due to the pervasive nature of work in our society, I have suggested that the workplace is a necessary site for analysis if the profession is truly committed to social justice issues because it is here that class relations are established, intersecting with many other forms of discriminatory practices, and where alienation is experienced. However, there has been a lack of critique within the counselling profession of capitalist modes of production despite evidence that they lead to inequality and alienation, both of which foster mental health concerns. Counselling psychologists can not only assist in challenging inequitable and unjust policies, practices, and procedures that may propagate injustice throughout all levels of society, but also advocate for changing the very basis of the way in which people work within society. Following Kendi's (2019) equivalence of anti-racist and anti-capitalist stances, I propose that counselling professionals, to be anti-racist and anti-oppressist, must similarly be anti-capitalist.

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[30] A 2015 study of 30 years of demographic data in the U.S. indicated that polluting industrial facilities were more likely to be placed in minority and low-income communities, with the researchers concluding that racial discrimination and sociopolitical factors are the best way to account for these inequities (Mohai, P., & Saha, R., 2015).

[31] Both in the U.S. and the U.K. there are currently policy proposals which make suggestions in the direction of workers' self-directed enterprises. See: https://berniesanders.com/issues/corporate-accountability-and-democracy/ in the U.S. and https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Alternative-Models-of-Ownership.pdf in the U.K.

Nevertheless, despite the calls for the adoption of an orientation that focuses on social justice issues, especially in light of the mounting empirical evidence supporting causal links between mental health and social inequities (Neilson, 2015), counselling psychology, following in step with other branches of psychology, has nevertheless historically depended on intra-psychic, individualistic clinical models to address the variety of problems that are presented to practitioners. These models locate the causes and location of concerns within persons and the help offered consequently comprises various assorted techniques of individual self-surveillance and self-mastery. Many of these approaches are biologically focused, patterning themselves after the disease models of medicine, without necessarily giving any real and meaningful consideration to social context, despite the academic acknowledgement that these contexts are important to address.

Historically, much of the critique of intra-psychic approaches has come from writers outside counselling psychology per se, like Paulo Friere who spoke about critical consciousness as a way of approaching social, political, and economic factors that shape people's lives (Ratts, 2009). Others have criticized the adoption of individualistic and biologically based models of distress as simply mistaken, and that because patterns of any type of behaviour, including so-called disturbed behaviour, are learned within social contexts, one-to-one psychotherapy is a futile pursuit (Albee, 1998). As a result, there has been a recognition that unless counsellors make an impact on the neighbourhoods, schools, media, culture, and within the wider religious, political, and social institutions of society, there can be little real effect in the lives of individuals (Goodman et al., 2004). The question becomes whether modern counselling practices can meet the challenge of providing these impacts, especially as they relate to systemic concerns.

“Neoliberalism isn't an economic program - it's a political program designed to produce hopelessness and kill any future alternatives”.

David Graeber

“The cheerleaders for neoliberalism work hard to normalize dominant institutions and relations of power through a vocabulary and public pedagogy that create market-driven subjects, modes of consciousness, and ways of understanding the world that promote accommodation, quietism and passivity”.

Henry Giroux

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it”.

Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*

Chapter 3: Counselling's Complicity with Capitalism?

3.1. Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, my exemplification of professional fields not adequately or seriously addressing foundational systemic inequities by looking at how such problem is handled or not handled continues to be the field of counselling psychology. In this sense, the reader may safely substitute 'counselling psychology' for any helping profession, including educational institutions, as they read on.

Recognizing the ubiquity of work within our society, I propose that the challenge for helping professions like counselling psychology in their professed agenda of addressing foundational systemic inequities is to problematize and critique capitalist modes of production within society and to challenge the philosophical underpinnings of the neoliberal agenda. The question is whether these professions are up to the task of doing so; as I will outline in this chapter, there is good reason to think that, historically and philosophically, and once again using counselling psychology as a familiar example, they are poor candidates in this regard. Nevertheless, counselling psychology's credibility in this area must, I suggest, depend upon grounding itself as a critic of capitalism if it is truly resolved to engage effectively with social justice. As mentioned in the last chapter, the hesitancy to make such a critique may well arise from a certain political conservatism, with many who feel that if we, as both citizens and helpers, merely adjust the edges of the capitalist system, by introducing more fairness and equality within certain unjust policies or practices, for example, then this will be sufficient to attain the goals of social justice. Although these alterations should be made, the philosophical basis for doing so tends to remain unspoken, and although they certainly appear to move the conversation in the direction of more democracy and equality in people's lives, they do not address the fundamental societal differences of power embodied in class division that generates unjust systems in the first place. This is not only a concern confined to the helping professions like counselling. For example, within the current climate movement, there are many voices who realize that tweaking the current system will not work (Malm, 2018). Working the edges of the climate crisis will not impede capitalism's fundamental philosophical belief in unlimited progress in a world of limited resources. Unless capitalism is fundamentally challenged, climate change will continue to wreak devastating, deadly havoc on the earth. This is why activist and author

Naomi Klein can candidly frame “climate change as a battle between capitalism and the planet” (Klein, 2014, Introduction, Really Bad Timing, para. 24). Similarly, within the world of political discourse, it is often suggested by social democrats that if we could only reign in what has been variously called crony capitalism, predatory capitalism, consumer capitalism, and other such characterizations of capitalism, through proper regulation, fair taxation, increased government spending, or better access to services (among other suggestions), then justice and equality would prevail. Yet the problem has always been capitalism itself (Blakeley, 2019; Wolff, 2012), no matter what the qualifier is. Despite many of these proposals being implemented by various governments at different times, capitalism has still lurched from crisis to crisis as is its wont, with the current climate crisis representing its ultimate, life threatening failure.

We might analogously say that mental health issues are a battle between capitalism and communities of people. It is essential that counselling unequivocally align itself with a critique of the way in which our societies are shaped by work, and the relationships constructed within workplaces, to address the inevitable alienation that undoubtedly fosters many mental health problems. In order for the helping professions to meaningfully engage with a sincere effort to address system change in relation to social justice, they are obligated to be radical in this regard (radical in terms of getting to the root of the problem), and determined to expose a system that perpetuates individualism, consumerism, and the exploitation of people for the benefit of a few. At the same time, they must advocate for societies that are based on democracy, fairness, equality, and equity. For, just as the current climate crisis is a manifestation of the greed of capitalist modes of organizing societies through a hyper-individualism, treating persons like machines and living environments like dead commodities, all in the interest of producing surplus value, so too the mental health crises are a not-unexpected symptom of such philosophies and practices. In the previous chapter, I explored the notion that counselling psychology lacks a philosophical foundation for engagement with social justice, and that alienation theory is a suitable candidate for this position; nevertheless, in this chapter I suggest that the philosophical basis for counselling’s praxis is in fact not missing at all, but merely unarticulated and obscured, and that, similar to other helping occupations, counselling is, upon closer consideration, a profession deeply grounded within capitalist practices and the philosophical sensibilities of neoliberalism. I shall explore these claims further in this chapter with an examination of some of the cultural,

philosophical, and practical ways in which many conventional counselling practices are embedded within these systems that ultimately serve to perpetuate the status quo.

3.2. Counselling as an Individualist Praxis

The development of counselling psychology, along with the rest of the so-called 'psych' disciplines, is largely connected to the same ideas of the nature of personhood and the role persons play within society that also defined the philosophical assumptions of capitalism and the spread of materialism as a world-view. Along with Descartes' mechanistic perspective of the individual and Darwin's biological evolutionary materialism, the individualistic philosophies that grew out of the Protestant Revolution within religion (Weber, 1976), with their emphasis on personal salvation, fuelled by Calvin's insistence on the importance of hard work, all ultimately contributed to the development of capitalism as an economic and political reality, with neoliberalism later becoming its philosophical accomplice (Fromm, 1994). Disciplines like counselling psychology are deeply rooted within these philosophical traditions, traditions which are essentially materialist, biologically based, individualistic, and focused on standards of 'normalcy' defined by people's ability to work hard and contribute to society. Furthermore, the very notion of 'development' within the realm of psychology reflected a cultural emphasis on a naturally occurring biological evolution that moved from primitive to sophisticated stages, thus accompanying the colonial agenda that saw the White European values of individuality and separation from the natural world as naturally superior to 'primitive' notions of the interconnection of community within an animated world (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

On the whole, counselling psychology has depended on various disease and disorder models of mental distress when evaluating persons, most of which emphasize an ahistorical and decontextualized version of the self, separate from the society in which it is embedded. Crudely stated, the ultimate goal of much of clinical practice is to 'fix' the individual so that they can return to life as good workers and consumers. Recent figures show why this is so crucial for employers, and to the economy. The Mental Health Commission of Canada (2012), for example, reports that mental health issues account for 30% of short- and long-term disability claims in Canada at a cost in excess of $50 billion annually, twice the amount paid for non-mental health issues. 500,000 Canadians miss work every week due to mental health complaints. In the United States,

wellness programs are a $6 billion industry (Ajunwa, 2017) despite questions around their efficacy (Berinato, 2015). Nevertheless, counselling practitioners often work with insurance companies, employer wellness programs, and employee assistance programs, and others, whose function is primarily to get the employee back into the workforce as quickly as possible, in the interests of resuming production of surplus for the employer. Moreover, and as a good example of capitalism's penchant for generating even more opportunities for capital exploitation, wellness programs can invite privacy invasion and discriminatory employment practices, or can become data collecting tools sold to, and used by, third-party businesses for the purposes of advertising and selling products (Ajunwa, 2017). It is in these ways that counselling psychology aligns itself with the very systems that are causing human distress in persons in the first place. Carl Ratner (2018) describes psychological life under capitalism as 'pathological normalcy'. He believes that neoliberal institutions encourage an individualism that opposes community and social cohesion, promoting anti-social thinking and behaviours, which in turn lead to a social callousness and cruelty. This is reflected in the pervasiveness of violence at all levels of society, including the exploitation of workers. Such stressors of normalcy create abnormal psychology, and yet psychologies merely contribute to the continuation of cycles of despair. Since misery and alienation can be monetized, it becomes possible to bring mental health into economic systems of prediction and control. Counselling psychology plays its role in assisting people to re-invigorate themselves to return to work. In this way, important political-economic questions regarding democracy and power are avoided through the lens of psychology which re-locates social concerns within individual persons (Davies, 2015).

Not only does the profession collaborate with capitalist interests in the circular business of supporting business, but they do so by constructing views of the individual in terms of the separate self (dualistically separate from the 'other,' a deadened world) that is regarded as not good enough or worthy enough in some way and that, therefore, becomes a site for the mining of surplus value.

3.2.1. Individualism as an Empty Self

Philip Cushman (1995) introduces the idea of the 'empty self' as the definitive form of being a human in modern times under capitalism:

> The empty self is a way of being human; it is characterized by a pervasive sense of personal emptiness and is committed to the values of self-liberation through consumption. The empty self is the perfect complement to an economy that must stave off economic stagnation by arranging for the continual purchase and consumption of surplus goods. Psychotherapy is the profession responsible for treating the unfortunate personal effects of the empty self without disrupting the economic arrangements of consumerism. Psychotherapy is permeated by the philosophy of self-contained individualism, exists within the framework of consumerism, speaks the language of self-liberation, and thereby unknowingly reproduces some of the ills it is responsible for healing. (p. 6)

The empty self, a modern post-war phenomenon, manifests itself in a multitude of ways, inhabiting every level of social intercourse. Within psychology one can see the focus on narcissism and borderline states and in the difficulties of establishing and maintaining intimate personal relationships (Rose, 1996). More generally, the empty self manifests in the rampant consumerism of modern neoliberal culture. Since wages have stagnated within the last 30 years or so, with the capitalist class becoming more and more wealthy, there has been an alarming increase in the use of credit to encourage continual spending, causing working families to incur more and more debt (Wolff, 2012). This has led to the extreme class divisions we see today, especially visible after the crash of 2008 (Blakeley, 2019), and with the inequality inherent in class divisions, the rise in mental health issues (Wilkinson, 2009). Yet the psychologies, with their focus on individualism and materialism, and their failure to substantively address the social causes of human distress, especially as cultivated in our relations of work, continue to perpetuate unjust systems through their historical individualist understanding of the self and society, and through their everyday practices.

3.2.2. Hegemony of Professionalization

There are various ways to understand how psychology has been able to become such a dominant discourse for understanding modern life, and has become a significant feature of most helping professions' understanding of the people they serve. Nikolas Rose (1998) suggests that it is psychology's claim of professionalization that accounts for its current influence in so many domains of life experience, including that of the workplace. Analysis of professionalization reveals "the ways in which professionals legitimate their social powers through their claim to possess esoteric knowledge and technical capacities not available to others" (p. 84). They accomplish this by aligning their interests with other dominant social groups like politicians and business people. By

articulating a certain special kind of knowledge, advocating for specialized techniques that make problems intelligible to others, and transforming regulatory practices to reflect the truth of such endeavours, the psychological industry legitimizes itself as a serious and unquestioned authority, an essential expert voice in the struggle against mental distress (Rose, 1998). Not only do counsellors extend a discipline of self-surveillance and interminable improvement on persons with distress, problematizing aspects of everyday living under capitalism as pathologies suitable for the expert gaze, but the tools of psychological practices are adopted by many of the related helping professions (i.e. social workers, doctors, care workers, etc.) for the same ends and, more importantly, by the culture at large, but especially by the workplace. The colonization of the subjectivities of persons through the methods, performances, and procedures of psychology and the expert position of the helper takes shape in the person of the individual client "whose individuality is no longer ineffable, unique, and beyond knowledge, but can be known mapped, calibrated, evaluated, quantified, predicted, and managed" (Rose, 1998, p. 88). This critique extends to the analysis of the workplace and the alienation that it produces in and amongst workers. In these contexts, it is not merely the individual who is subject to the disciplinarian effects of psychology but also the spaces and relationships within the workplaces themselves (Rose, 1998). The psychologization of personalities, attitudes, initiative, engagement, satisfaction, and other measurements allows for calculation and management.

Even more insidiously, the psychologization of the workplace invites opportunities for an accounting of risk, the complement of accountancy and management. This involves the documentation of aspects of peoples' lives that are not in themselves problematic - family background, life-style choices, housing - but which become data for the prediction and control of persons in the future, thus opening new fields of purview for the psychological experts (Rose, 1998).

3.2.3. The Individual as Deficient and the Expertise of the Counsellor

Counselling psychology, for all its interest in positivity and emphasis on health, nevertheless adopts languages of deficiency in relation to those seeking assistance. Such language is often borrowed from the disease models of general medicine: patient, client, clinic, clinician, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, treatment plan, and other such words and phrases all bring to mind the notions of disorder and expert knowledge, with

the person seeking help as ‘object’, a mere thing to be repaired like a machine (Maddux, 2005). The word client, commonly used for those seeking counselling, is derived from a late Middle English word which originated in the Latin *cluens* meaning ‘heeding’, from *cluere* ‘to hear or obey’. The word was originally used for persons under the protection and patronage of another. It, therefore, has a denotation of passivity, lack of agency, and of obedience to another. The other, of course, is the expert counsellor whose application of knowledge will have a curative effect, much as the administration of medicine by a doctor will cure a physical disease. The dominance of the medical model within many counselling practices helps in reproducing capitalist cultural norms by emphasizing the existence of classes of people who know and those who do not, those who work hard to maintain healthy norms and those who are incapable, insufficient, or too ignorant to know better. This reflects the meritocratic and plutocratic systems of political governance within current society, and counselling, despite calls to challenge unjust systemic inadequacies, essentially contributes to maintaining and propagating them through its practices.

Indeed, psychology’s contribution to the furtherance of neoliberal narratives is often hidden and difficult to isolate. The application of power often does not rely on the usual conventional methods of prohibition, oppression, restriction, and regulation, but rather on a type of self-surveillance that shapes identity formation according to norms set by the society and its professional disciplines, like counselling psychology (White, 2011). Aspects of the self and of experience are colonized and psychologized, made to be found deficient in comparison to neoliberal norms, with persons encouraged to discipline themselves to meet the expected societal standards. By redefining and transforming their naturally rich inner life into objects, mere commodities that function to advance the continued production of surplus value within workplace settings, people are persuaded to consume individualistic psychological labels and tricks, all of which are designed to grow, assist, transform, and improve the deficient self in the interests of further commodification and capital flow.

The materialization and commodification of the psyche has been accomplished in different ways in psychology. For example, with the introduction of the intelligence test, Galton’s normal curve, developmental scales, and personality assessments, it became possible for the experts to objectify and quantify more and more of the human experience (Rose, 1998). With the decreasing influence and authority of religious and

moral imperatives that had once grown alongside the development of capitalism and its neoliberal philosophies, psychological discourse became the new way to instill the appropriate practices and disciplines required to live in society, with experts of subjectivity translating the existential questions of life into technical frameworks that provided comparable solutions to effectively manage perceived disfunction (Rose, 1978). Counsellors often play the mediatory role between the objectives of the workplace and the life pursuits of the employee, “teaching the arts of self-realization that will enhance employees as individuals as well as workers” (Rose, 1978, p. 161). Thus, the goals of the employee are aligned with the goals of the workplace so that the (self) fulfillment of one is exactly the fulfillment of the other.

3.2.4. Psychology and the Connection of the Individual to Labour

From its very origin capitalism sought out psychological strategies for increasing surplus value from its workers. Early industry recognized the utility in psychological methods to make certain that manual labour was performed with optimal proficiency for the maximization of profit (Parker, 2007). Industrial psychology was deeply connected to the work of the industrialist Frederick Taylor (1856 - 1915) whose method was to atomize work process into compartmented, analysable parts so that a worker could be timed on how long it took them to accomplish a task. On this basis, methods were then developed to possibly improve on these functions, increasing the productivity of workers within less and less time. Similar to the behaviouristic models of human psychology popular at the time, Taylor based his analysis on prediction and control at the level of business operations (Parker, 2007). This method allows, therefore, for study of future opportunities as reflected in the performance plans, five-year plans, and similar projection methods of today’s modern business models (Parker, 2007). Such psychological approaches view the mind as a mechanistic and hierarchical machine, with the reliability of rationality at the top, and emotions, considered servient and capricious, well down at the bottom. These fundamentally patriarchal models reflected the way in which workplaces were themselves set up, always under the control and direction of the ‘rational’ and sensible manager or supervisor.[32] A good example of Taylorism at work were the factories owned by Henry Ford, the famous American car

[32] See Chapter Two for a description of alienation of both the senses and the emotions under capitalist relations of production.

manufacturer. His application of the principles of Taylorism, in fact, became known as Fordism, and his methods strongly influenced capitalist business practices in the United States in particular (Komlosy, 2018).

As pointed out in the last chapter, classism cannot be properly separated from racism and Ford's business practices are a cogent example of this connection. For example, Parker (2007) notes that

> [o]nly when workers could speak good English and show a good enough knowledge of local dress codes, cultural mores and attitudes to work would they receive full pay. There has always been a close link between capitalism and racism, and the employment of 'aliens' in the new industries during the early development of capitalism also inspired employers to use divide-and-rule tactics to separate workers from each other. This is why alienation always includes peculiar racial fantasies about those who are 'other' to Western selves. (p. 60)

It was not just a matter of changing work environments that would improve productivity. In fact, psychology began to make the case that it was personal and individual factors that would make the difference in increasing surplus value for the employer. The so-called Hawthorne studies conducted at the Western Electric Company manufacturing plant near Chicago between 1924 and 1933 (Olson, Verley, Santos, & Salas, 2004) provide a good example of the way in which it was increasingly believed that employee attitude and 'mind-set' influenced productivity. These studies involved putting attention on relationships and emotional experience, in addition to rationality, as a predictor of productivity. As a result, today not only has rationality been commodified and used to influence productivity but so too have emotions (Hochschild, 2011; Zembylas & Fendler, 2007). For workers in various kinds of service industries this commodification turns into a type of performance, a form of 'deep-acting' which only functions to further alienate the person from their authentic feelings and experience of themselves (Parker, 2007).

Both counselling psychology and education have been greatly influenced by Taylorism and industrial psychology. As discussed in the last chapter, counselling psychology in the United States originated within psychology proper, whereas in Canada counselling was rooted both in the professional psychology of the United States and also in the educational psychology of the universities. What has been termed the learning outcomes movement, for example, an educational practice now more in vogue but with a long history within all levels of educational institutions, is really just an extension of

Taylor's ideas and principles (Stoller, 2015). It is based on Taylor's notion that a well-run industrial system must establish 'tasks', or well-defined, quantifiable ends, so that individual and collective progress could be measured. These tasks originated with management with no consideration given to the various needs or requirements of the workers, and it was expected that workers strictly conform to the narrow tasks assigned without deviation (Stoller, 2015). Similarly, these principles offer to modern education administrators certainty, repeatability, and predictability, reflecting the dualistic ontology of a division between body and mind, and self from the world, particularly in the way that "education is that thing done to students which results in them 'knowing' the subject matter" (Stoller, 2015, p. 327). So, not only was Taylorism, and the psychologies of the time that supported it, essential to the increased growth of modern business but it was also highly influential within educational administration and practice. It was historically within this societal and institutional mix that counselling psychology was developed.

Similar to the learning outcomes movement within education, counselling theory and practice often enthusiastically endorses these same kinds of teleological, technocratic constructs within its praxis. Especially when dealing with third-party interests, there are usually requirements to provide reports which outline diagnoses, treatment plans, goals, and progress. These practices not only create hierarchies of knowledge, requiring theories which position persons as deficient in character, skills, or capacity, but they also privilege 'insider' expert knowledge by those who are perceived to somehow know better.

3.3. Reproduction of Class Division within Counselling Practices

The great American pragmatist and philosopher of education John Dewey clearly saw the implications of technocratic influences on all aspects of organized social life, including schooling. He critiqued Taylor's ideal (capitalist) system as a system akin to slavery[33] so that "the skills and attitudes necessary to support this ideal system are determined and articulated by a set of expert managers - *an aristocratic class* [emphasis added]" (Stoller, 2015, p. 327). This is as true in counselling theory and practice as well as it is within education. By reproducing the role of the expert within counselling practice,

[33] David Graeber (2006) makes a direct connection between slavery and capitalism, since capacity to work is the basis of both forms of labour. This comparison is even more persuasive when one considers the inability of most people to afford much more than necessities and lodging with their wages, without going into debt for anything extra.

which is, in essence, the reproduction of the class division found within society as a whole, counsellors are complicit in replicating the structures of the dominant capitalist culture and, as a consequence, inviting and normalizing the conditions of alienation.

As mentioned previously, counselling psychology is a product of educational institutions which have been heavily influenced pedagogically by Taylorism (Mather & Seifert, 2011; Stoller, 2015) and countenanced by the notion that expert groups of people are best positioned to direct the actions of others. Fundamentally, it reflects societal norms wherein it is accepted that expert elites are the most capable to run society and its institutions, including the workplace, a reflection not of democracy and the principles of equality, but of a pernicious form of oligarchy.[34] Under these circumstances, then, it was not surprising that counselling psychology adopted theoretical models which perpetuated both the institutions of oligarchic power but also the methods and practices which assist in reinforcing capitalist power relations and neoliberal philosophy. This occurred within a complex interface of individualistic, materialistic, and mechanistic philosophies that arose from around the time of Descartes,[35] all of which colluded with Calvinistic 'work ethic' doctrines, propelling capitalism to its position in the world, and giving the 'psych' arts in general their philosophical character. Thus, the business, teaching, and propagation of psychology within Western capitalist (I cannot comment on how Eastern psychologies have impacted the development of economies in the East) society became a mutual and inter-dependent reflection of the same economic and social relations found within the society itself, quite deliberately espousing a similar individualism through acontextual and ahistorical explanations of human distress and suffering. Moreover, the techniques of 'cure' emphasized change regimens and strategies ('treatment plans') that perpetuated endless cycles of psychological inadequacy, dependency on experts, and incessant consumption in its users. In this way, psychological practices reflect the wider society, which in turn is transformed by psychological ways of viewing the world, relationships, and the individual. Society's individualism is fed by psychology's insistence that mental

[34] See my comments on democracy in Footnote 5.

[35] For a rare refutation of the charge that Descartes was an individualist of the mental see Ferraiolo, Owens, & Heil (1996) and for a response see Moya (1997).

distress is a private affair reflecting personal weakness or defectiveness, only solvable through compliance to industry sponsored cures (Rosenthal et. al., 2016).

It is within these hegemonies of so-called individuality and personal choice that attention is diverted away from the real causes of human mental distress located in unjust and alienated social relations, most notably within those of the modern Western workplace where we spend most of our lives, and instead towards individual culpability and brokenness. Moreover, these problems are best handled by an elite class of professionals, counselling psychologists and other helping professionals, who have access to special expert knowledge that will solve our issues, if dutifully applied and practiced. In practical and realistic terms, however, most of these practices are ways of self-surveillance and self-discipline (to use Foucault's terms) in order to encourage persons to continue to produce surplus value for the capitalist classes. I agree with Rosenthal (2016) when he asserts that it is not bad choices, poor parenting, wonky brain chemistry, faulty genetics, or accidents that are the best predictors of distress, but rather one's position within the social hierarchy.

3.4. Couples and Family Counselling Maintain Capitalist Relations of Power

Social hierarchy is significantly determined by class position as established and shaped within the workplace relationships of a society. Of course, the dynamics of these relationships are complex; nevertheless, even if one were to suggest, as a good systems theorist of one type or another might, that perhaps family systems (Nichols, 2010) instead are the cause of human distress (as opposed to mere individual failings), it would still be difficult to separate that analysis from the pervasive social divisions of working life within neoliberal society (Fish, 1993).[36] Historically, the modern family structure also appeared within the increasing influence of capitalistic modes of production. People moved from villages and towns, where more communal, expansive forms of family life had existed to provide emotional, material, and social support, to live in big cities in order to secure employment within the industrial factories and businesses and where, consequently, the marriage partner became the sole source of any needed

[36] See Parker & McDowell (2017) for a consideration of how to integrate family therapy within a consideration of broader social structures and power relations.

supports (Rosenthal, 2016). The idea of romantic love was constructed around the same time as these transitions. Coonz (2006), for example, notes that

> [t]he new sentimentalization of married love in the Victoria period was a radical social experiment. The Victorians were the first people in history to try to make marriage the pivotal experience in people's lives and married love the principal focus of their emotions, obligations, and dissatisfactions. Despite the stilted language of the era, Victorian marriage harbored all the hopes for romantic love, intimacy, personal fulfillment, and mutual happiness that were to be expected more openly and urgently during the early twentieth century. (Coontz, 2006, pp. 177-178)

This description reveals the social movement away from communal expressions of family life (and thus a more social sense of self) to an individualistic, isolationistic, and almost utilitarian conceptualization of the family unit, based on the individual's internal feeling of romantic love.

Counselling psychology, like all of the psychologies and psychiatry, has been a supporter of the 'traditional' family, along with its gender roles, in order to serve the needs of capitalist workplaces (Parker, 2007). However, adherence to strict gender roles can be the cause of many of the problems which present in the counsellor's office. The cultivation of romantic notions of what a male or a female should be like within a relationship often leads to conflict, anxiety, loneliness within the relationship, in addition to other challenges. As Rosenthal (2016) bluntly summarizes the matter:

> Behind the myth of the happy family are two people who are socialized to be opposites, crammed in a box, subjected to falling living standards, rising debt and social insecurity. They are expected to raise children, who have lots of needs, and to do this with no outside support. Add bouts of unemployment, injury, or illness. Add some dependent relatives. Then make it difficult for these people to leave. Insist that they solve their own problems, and if they cannot, then it must be their fault or their partner's fault. This is a recipe for disaster, as unrelenting stresses build to the point of explosion. (Myth Personal Life, Shame, para. 3)

Just as the modern family functions to reproduce class consciousness and certain prescribed expectations regarding life course, it also creates gender roles which often cause intractable conflicts between persons. Prior to the last century, monogamy and its ethical accomplice, fidelity, were manifestations of lineage and property rights, and the presence of love within such relationships was irrelevant (Perel, 2017). As conventional ideas changed with the dawn of capitalism, love would become the main

channel for marriage, instead of social prestige or entitlement, but with the same requirements for fidelity. As a result, responsibility for any problems that might occur within the contemporary relationship are borne by the individuals within it and the solution to those problems are worked on individually or, from a family systems perspective, between the partners. When, therefore, the energy of romantic love has fallen away after a number of years, the rigid standardization of gender roles couched within the stresses of workaday life are causative of much relational distress. Capitalism insists on the modern family unit for its own ends - the production of workers - and counselling psychology obliges it in this regard. The family unit must therefore be saved at all cost and the counsellor has, as expert, the exclusive tools to assist in accomplishing this goal.

Whether a counsellor meets with individuals, couples, or families, the practices are often such that they perpetuate individualistic understandings of mental distress, with no real or meaningful consideration given to contextual factors in the development of issues. One way in which this manifests is in the attempt to 'diagnose' individuals' complaints according to systems of categorization aligned with medical models of disease. A significant resource for this approach is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (5th ed.)* (DSM-V) [37] produced by the American Psychiatric Association, and it is instructive to consider this document as a prominent example of the way in which individualism, materialist biological notions of disorders, capitalism, and the propagation of the technocrat with their expert knowledge, all conspire together to advance capitalist interests while simultaneously obscuring the social determinants of distress people experience within modern society.

3.5. DSM-V and the Repair of the Separate Self

My intent on reviewing the DSM-V in the following discussion is to show how the classification of mental distress exemplifies the argument of this chapter, that is, that counselling practices, based on materialistic and individualistic conceptions of the self and its relationship to society, is in fact a collaborator in the capitalist and neoliberal project. Admittedly, in my experience many counsellors do not use diagnostic systems

[37] See American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, D.C: Author.

like the DSM-V.[38] However, the pervasiveness of its categories within the psyche of the culture often manifests in the ways people present their problems, conceptualize their issues (particularly in this age of Google and voluminous self-help materials), and in their expectation for 'cure' (how many times have I heard people say "He's so OCD" or "Depression is a chemical imbalance"?). The DSM-V very often shapes conversations and narratives around mental distress, despite counselling's more progressive attempts to focus on the strengths and resources of the individual rather than on their shortcomings. Indeed, in many instances, clients are sent for counselling after being given a diagnosis (and prescribed some medication) by a general practitioner or a psychiatrist, most of the latter group of professionals no longer having interest in 'counselling' clients. Furthermore, insurance companies, wellness programs, and cases involving legal matters very often demand from counsellors specific diagnostic categories, and treatment plans based on them, requiring the nomenclature of the DSM-V, or systems of categorization like it.

The classification of mental disorders or diseases is not a new phenomenon, and it has a rich and oftentimes appalling history. Despite common perceptions that these classificatory systems are objective and scientific, based on strong empirical evidence, they have always been socially constructed and historically grounded. A good example is that "during slavery days, experts argued that Black people were psychologically suited for a life of slavery, so there must be something wrong with those who rebelled. In 1851, the diagnosis of Drapetomania (runaway fever) was applied to slaves who kept trying to escape" (Rosenthal, 2016, Mental Illness, Cuts, para. 5). This 'disease' disappeared for obvious reasons but nevertheless its very existence is instructive of the close ties historically between psychological hegemony, race, and capitalism.

Initially, the first articulations of the DSM, both the DSM-I and DSM-II, were rooted in psychoanalytic theory, but eventually its writers moved away from psychoanalytic conceptions in attempts to provide a more atheoretical and bio-psycho-social orientation (Cosgrove & Wheeler, 2013). Yet, these attempts were unsuccessful

[38] The publication of the DSM-V did not go unopposed. The British Psychological Society, for example, citing concerns that "clients and the general public are negatively affected by the continued and continuous medicalisation of their natural and normal responses to their experiences" and that "the putative diagnoses presented in DSM-V are clearly based largely on social norms, with 'symptoms' that all rely on subjective judgements, with little confirmatory physical 'signs' or evidence of biological causation" among other issues, wrote to the American Psychiatric Association regarding these matters prior to the DSM-V's publication in 2013. See: https://dxrevisionwatch.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/dsm-5-2011-bps-response.pdf

and whatever one thought of the previous psychoanalytically influenced earlier forms of the manual, the later versions (DSM-III and DSM- IV) lost their narrative slant to become a more symptom-documentary approach (Cosgrove & Wheeler, 2013). The manual sought to align itself with the disease models of the physical sciences, a reflection of psychiatry's long-standing desire to be seen as a legitimate and empirically-based science on level with the physical sciences, and with medicine in particular.

Moreover, the dubious movement toward a disease-based, and therefore acontextual, model of mental problems had some even more insidious ramifications. Since the disease model of human illness in general is connected to the dispensing of medications, the categorization of mental problems as 'illness' became fertile ground for the colonization of people's concerns by the pharmaceutical industry. Not only did the pharmacological industry marry itself to the discourse around what drugs are available to 'cure' mental problems, but the industry became active in defining what is normal and what is not normal, and thus what constitutes mental disorder. The extent of this has been more than egregious. Particularly in the last few years there has been increasing recognition and criticism of the role that pharmaceutical companies have had in the decision making processes regarding the definition of mental problems in the West, and the manner in which they impact jurisprudence, insurance claims, mental health research, and treatment (Cosgrove & Wheeler, 2013).

3.5.1. Toward Disease and Disorder Models of Human Distress

The disease model of human mental distress is a reflection of the psychiatric (and subsequently, the psychological) community's need to be seen as a legitimate medical sub-specialty. Psychology in general, and to some extent (although more predominantly in the United States) counselling psychology in particular, gladly adopted the organic explanation of mental problems, along with the medical languaging that accompanied it (Albee, 2000). This was for three main reasons. First, several of the major theories of psychology, and thus of psychopathology, were rooted in biologically based understandings of the psyche. Second, there was a need for psychology in all its various forms, and to a greater or lesser extent, to appear scientific in order to establish its legitimacy. This became as true for psychology as it had been for psychiatry, which gradually abandoned its focus on talk therapy in favour of prescribing medications (Humphreys, 1996). Third, the reality of everyday practice for counsellors is that it is

entrenched within delivery systems that demand medical-type explanations of mental distress (Wampold, Ahn, & Coleman, 2001). As noted previously, even the language of much of counselling psychology reflects the medicalization and pathologizing of human distress. This is the language of what Maddux (2005) calls 'the illness ideology'. Thus we can find terms like symptom, disorder, pathology, illness, diagnosis, treatment, doctor, patient, clinic, clinical, and clinician within the texts, journals, educational facilities, and places of work of counsellors (Maddux, 2005). In this regard, it is important to note that adopting a medical model does not necessarily imply biological explanations of distress nor the use of medications to alleviate that distress. The medical model is as much a matter of praxis and methodology more than anything else. Specifically, like the medical model, it contains five components: the presentation of a complaint to the therapist, the labeling of the complaint with psychological nomenclature, the theoretical basis for effecting change, implementation of specific methods connected to the theory, and, finally, the attribution of any improvement to the methods employed. It is the specificity of the last component that gives authority to the methods used rather than to contextual factors (Wampold et al., 2001).

Despite the work of many psychologists to provide alternative models of human suffering, these are generally not recognized by third-party payers who inevitably insist on diagnoses, prognoses, and treatment plans. As a result, as Albee (2000) points out, the inclination of the mental health practitioner to align with biologically-based explanations of mental distress has political consequences, perpetuating systems that treat individuals as deficit-based and responsible for their own distress. He comments that

> [t]here are major political differences between a medical/organic/brain-defect model to explain mental disorders and a social-learning, stress-related model. The former is supported by the ruling class because it does not require social change and major readjustments to the status quo. The social model, on the other hand, seeks to end or to reduce poverty with all its associated stresses, as well as discrimination, exploitation, and prejudices as other major sources of stress leading to emotional problems. By aligning itself with the conservative view of causation, clinical psychology has joined the forces that perpetuate social injustice. (p. 248)

Although there are no reliable biological markers for any known mental 'illness', including schizophrenia, psychiatry has endorsed and popularized the notion that mental problems are biologically based. This form of reductionism has been seen in the oft-

quoted assertion, for example, frequently heard within public discourse, that depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, despite the fact that there is no evidence for such a claim (Deacon & Baird, 2009). Yet, this faux-belief is enough for psychiatrists, bolstered by the check-mark accounting of symptoms, to prescribe a drug like Prozac for the diagnosis of major depression. These practices clearly discount contextual, historical, and social determinants of the source of concerns, with the result that systemic issues are not challenged (Davies, 2015). Other examples exist. Cosgrove and Wheeler (2013) describe how the inclusion of menstrual distress in women as a mood disorder, called Post Menstrual Distress Disorder in the DSM-V, "undermines an appreciation for the role that stress, sexual abuse, and violence play in women's experiences of emotional distress" and that in categorizing PMDD as a mood disorder it "has marginalized the role of relational and other contextual factors in women's experiences of emotional distress" (Cosgrove & Wheeler, 2013, p. 100).

3.5.2. Conflicts of Interest: Capitalism at Work

Cosgove and Wheeler (2013) have documented the conflicts of interest that are apparent in the constitution of the committee members that were on the DSM-IV team. It was found that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) receives considerable drug industry funding and that, for example, all the members of the 2006 DSM panels on Schizophrenia and Psychotic Disorders and Mood Disorders, problems normally treated with medication, had some type of financial ties to the pharmacological industry (Cosgrove & Wheeler, 2013).

Despite attempts by the APA to appear transparent in these matters by advocating for a mandatory disclosure policy, with the expected result that those with industry ties would not put themselves forward on the committee, there was, in fact, a 21% increase of those with such relationships between the construction of the DSM-IV and the DSM-V so that 69% of the membership reported having connections to the pharmaceutical industry (Cosgrove & Wheeler, 2013). These problems are not merely a matter of particular individuals' lack of ethical or personal scruples; rather objectivism becomes an institutional problem. Hence, institutional corruption can be contrasted to individual corruption through a recognition that the former produces an 'improper dependence' that subverts the organization's goals and reduces public trust, all in the interests of profit-seeking over truth-seeking (Cosgrove & Wheeler, 2013).

The consequence of the institutional corruption particularized in the collusion between psychiatrists and the pharmaceutical industry is the creation of new ‘diseases’ and ‘disorders’, a colonization and commodification of the human psyche in the interests of making profits. For example, despite the research (and the universal experience of many) indicating that people may develop culturally appropriate sadness or depression after many different varieties of losses, the DSM-V now diagnoses such symptoms as a mental disorder after only a two-week period (Horwitz, 2015). What were once considered problems of living, which include not only the natural and normal responses to life like anxiety or sadness, but also the challenges that accompany any life journey, like indecision or lack of clarity of purpose, have become diseases requiring medication, sold, of course, for exorbitant profits by the industry. Persons’ distress, as well as any perceived ‘stuckness,’ have become sites for mining wealth, conduits for the accumulation and flow of capital, with the resultant enrichment of a small minority. By propagating a disease model of mental issues, and with the increasing encroachment of such classifications into both ordinary life problems and existential concerns, structural and systemic contributing factors of people’s issues are ignored or considered irrelevant. Since mental issues are decontextualized, medicalized, and stripped of any social or environmental factors, any unjust systemic circumstances are not dealt with, or trivialized. This means that the alienation felt by workers, revealed in varying forms of mental distress and the attempts to alleviate it, is viewed by the hegemonic powers as individual, isolated, and personal responses having nothing to do with the unjust and undemocratic work arrangements of capitalism (Roberts, 2015).

3.5.3. DSM-V Ignores Culture

The DSM-V, in its attempt to provide an objective and scientific account of the presence of mental disorder, does not take into account contextual factors at all. As a consequence, there has been much criticism of this absence from many different circles within and outside psychology, but especially from feminist and multicultural writers. The DSM-V is a document that reflects the elite privilege of White, educated men who have based their categories on long-standing Western dualisms between mind and body, the separation of emotions from cognition and rationality, and all of these from the body itself (Wampold et al., 2001). This approach, while ignoring the influence of relationships embodied within cultural and societal practices, are themselves deeply entrenched within culture-bound systems that reflect materialist, individualist, and capitalist

understandings of persons. Systems of categorization of human distress into symptoms and syndromes are not representative of an 'objective', empirically-based reality but are instead ways of establishing hierarchies of power that assist in maintaining the movement of capital. Mental disorders and their categorization in manuals like the DSM-V cannot be thought of as actual facts regarding the psyche but rather as social artifacts constructed with the same intentions that race, gender, and class are created, which is to establish and maintain the ideology and power of certain particular individuals within society (Maddux, 2005), a kind of cultural colonialism of the mind.

3.6. Counselling as a Reflection of Capitalist and Alienated Society

The practice of counselling psychology, originating in an era which saw the rise of capitalism within society and of a scientific materialism that de-emphasized community but instead focused on the isolated individual, should be viewed, from my perspective, as a highly politicized endeavour. My own assessment is that attempting to couch the project in scientific, and therefore ostensibly objective, terms, counselling psychology's methods and practices reflect and perpetuate the capitalist status quo. Psychology is not politically neutral, although it is perceived to be so by many students of the discipline and certainly by the general public (Roberts, 2015). Like psychiatry and psychology before it, counselling psychology has fought to be recognized as a legitimately scientific practice and to establish its own professional identity (Richardson, 1993). Primarily, it has distinguished itself from these other professions by focusing on the health and wellness aspects of human experience, the strengths and resources of clients, and on 'positive' psychology (Bedi et al., 2011). Although these attempts are superficially encouraging, they are, like the traditional psychologies, nevertheless fundamentally based on some unique, and politically charged, assumptions (Davies, 2015). The primary assumption is that the locus of psychological attention must be on the individual to the relative exclusion of social forces (Roberts, 2015). This flows directly from capitalist and neoliberal doctrines of the primacy of the individual self above all else, situating any problems as defects of character. For example, as briefly mentioned previously, one can see the deep connection between political philosophy and psychology reflected in the words of Margaret Thatcher from 1978, in an interview with the Catholic Herald, where she proclaims that poverty is really nothing other than a flaw in fundamental character, a personality defect (Catholic Herald, 22 December, 1978). This statement can be compared to the views of Martin Seligman, considered the major

force behind the official positive psychology movement, who, when asked what he thought is contributing to the rise of depression within our society, remarked that it was a pervasive victimology which encourages a culture of helplessness when circumstances are not favourable, instead of the recognition that the issue could be one of poor character and bad decisions (Seligman, 2009).

The second assumption that follows from the first is that the business of psychological research is to discover laws of nature, forever true and present, that bear on human beings at all times and places (Roberts, 2015). The results of such assumptions is that psychological constructs like the self, personality, attitudes, intelligence, and mental illness, to name a few, are isolated from their historical and socio-cultural contexts and treated as independent facts about the world. Consequently, psychology effectively obscures the ideological systemic forces that are in reality problematic by interiorizing them within the bodies of individual persons (Roberts, 2015). Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the individual to subject themselves to the scrutiny of expert observers whose job is to provide solutions with their specialized knowledge. These solutions ultimately require personal, individual responsibility for change, thus removing all accountability for change from the unjust system within which the person lives (Sugarman, 2015). Despite the fact that capitalist workplaces generate alienation in its many different forms, psychology does not look to these sites to address the problem. On the contrary, the person is expected to ‘change’ or ‘grow’, or in some way accumulate new coping skills, that will help them to accommodate to the workplace, thus removing all culpability from the workplace itself.

Moreover, resistance, non-conformity, or anti-social tendencies on the part of persons within the workplace are pathologized as personal foibles instead of a natural human reaction to conditions that are oppressive, discriminatory, or simply unjust (Hickinbottom-Brawn, 2013). Our ancient emotional networks that evolved within communities of co-operation, not of competition, and which naturally respond to inequities, are dismissed or punished, and must therefore be supressed (Glantz & Bernhard, 2018). Disengagement is seen by the business world as a kind of corporate virus which must be stamped out at all cost, not by addressing systemic issues, but by colonizing the minds and bodies of individual employees. Roberts (2015) points out that “in effect psychology contributes to the privatising of responsibility in a world where transnational corporations behave with no responsibility. In the midst of the mess which

envelops us, good adjustment is mapped out by psychologists as happiness not protest" (p. 24). This is fundamentally a political project. Psychology is designed to supress any outrage or natural human emotion that expresses distress at the current system, and by using an individualistic reductionism, under the guise and authority of natural science, silence any voices that might threaten the accumulation of surplus value by the capitalist classes.

3.7. Toward an Authentic Empty Self

Cushman's (1995) 'empty self' is a powerful metaphor for the current condition of persons within our society, representing as it does a kind of dark and shadowy realm of never-ending consumption in the quest for peace and happiness, a reflection of the individualism fostered by the neoliberal agenda. The Buddhists call this the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts, a state of being wherein urges and desires are never quite met, cravings for new objects are insatiable, and where there is no end to it all and therefore no real rest or satisfaction. We have seen how relationship and connections with others and the natural world are, through alienation and commodity fetishism, reduced to mere appearances and instead transferred over to the accumulation of objects in the pursuit of fulfillment. Capitalism not only extracts surplus value from the bodies of people but, through the alienation that arises from disconnections with life activity, it also mines the emotional and psychological lives of people, with the psychologies as its accomplice.

Yet these shadow ways of being in the world, including the manifestation of the empty self, are the obverse of the true empty self, what the Buddhist traditions call the *Dharmakaya*, the Buddha nature or essential self, which itself is often described as *sunyata* or emptiness. Other Eastern traditions know this essential self as consciousness (Wilber, 1979). In the Vedanta traditions of India, the supreme nature found in all things (and ultimately, as all things) is called *Brahman*, and though indescribable, is nevertheless the source of the qualities of sat-chit-ananda: being, consciousness, and bliss. It may be worth noting that bliss can best be translated as happiness or, even better, peace (Spira & Russell, 2016). This essential self is empty because it has no discernable objective qualities. It is by definition the Subject and so any qualities, being themselves objective, cannot define the subject. This consciousness is much like the space which holds all things within its embrace but is itself not a thing. No-thing, or empty.

Thus, underneath the false social self that characterizes 21st century capitalist society, a kind of false self that in fact denies the social in any truly engaged human sense, and beneath the empty self of the individual driven by the accumulation of commodities to satisfy its longing for connection, there lies a true empty self. Since this self is described as happiness, or peace, it is an antithesis to the internalized commodified self, perpetually driven by desire and dissatisfaction. A connection with the true empty self provides an almost immediate transformative escape from the clutches of the neoliberal agenda on all levels. This self, which I name as consciousness itself and which cannot be mined as a commodity because it is not an object, provides a gateway, concurrent with system change, to a radical shift in both the individual and society. It is within these two realms, the inner and the outer, that the helping professions must focus in order to fulfill their commitments to personal and social justice.

Although this proposal may sound as though I am returning to a panentheistic Hegelianism, or even to a pure idealistic notion of the place of consciousness as the world, it should rather be seen as a re-introduction of consciousness to its proper place within materiality, and vice versa. This is more in line with Spinoza, but it need not involve religious concepts. I argue in the next chapter that panpsychism not only offers an account of consciousness in the world but that it also provides a basis for new ways of seeing the world and constructing notions of social justice.

3.8. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have argued that counselling psychology, like many of the psychological professions along with educational institutions, has developed its practices concurrent with, and indeed grounded in, the practices of capitalism, neoliberalism, philosophical materialism, and individualism. These forces conspire to produce a view of the world that minimizes community and promotes an atomized understanding of the individual; encourages competition over co-operation; creates classes through the division of labour in workplaces based on the old feudalism, despite the appeal to increased democracy in society; and views individuals as commodified machines from which to mine labour for the production of goods, in order to sell those same commodities back to people in the fulfillment of constructed needs. Despite a legitimate critique that counselling psychology's engagement with social justice lacks a philosophical foundation (Thompson & Shermis, 2004), I suggest that the reason for the

lack of an explicit elucidation in this regard is the profession's alliance with neoliberalism and capitalism which serves to obscure its complicity in perpetuating the very psychological concerns it purports to relieve. Social justice issues, like opposition to discrimination and the accentuation of multiculturalism, have been welcome areas of concern within the profession; yet, they will not be properly addressed until there are systemic changes away from the societal organizations and institutions that generate them. I have argued that, similar to the world of politics and climate change issues, reformist playing around the edges of counselling practice is insufficient for real alignment with social justice. I have pointed out that the way in which psychological practices are robustly aligned with neoliberalism can be seen in the value of the individual as a decontextualized site for commodification, the use of the disease model as an explanation of mental distress with a disinterest in environmental factors, the role of the counsellor as expert, and the association of the profession with practices that are connected to business interests. I used the utilization of the DSM-V as representative of some of these concerns. Not only do these practices mirror the current neoliberal imperative of individualism and the primacy of the so-called free market found within the dominant society, but they actively perpetuate the commodification of the individual at all levels of their being, leading to their existence as 'empty selves'. Finally, I introduced the idea that the empty self can also be viewed as the shadow side of the true empty self, the intrinsic nature of things including humans, which I describe as consciousness. A turn toward consciousness serves as a gateway to emancipation from within, just as system change serves the same purpose from without.

Consciousness is a gateway because it re-introduces that which fundamentally connects us to all. Since it lacks objective qualities - it is the subject, and not an object - there is no-thing inherent within it to separate one from another. Being no-thing in itself denies the possibility of its commodification and thus it opens up a sphere of freedom from oppression and exploitation. An exploration of consciousness, particularly through a panpsychic world-view, represents an opposition to materialism per se and provides an alternative perspective on the world as vitally alive and precious. The world is no longer seen as a mere lifeless resource to exploit for profit. Human beings can also no longer be seen in such a way. While systemic change, as exemplified by the democratization of the workplace as a means to eliminating alienation and the mental health issues that arise from it, is the way to liberty from the outside, an understanding of consciousness

as the intrinsic nature of things is the path to emancipation from within. These dual-aspect pathways could serve as the philosophical basis for a professional praxis aligned with social justice.

“Consciousness cannot be accounted for in physical terms. For consciousness is absolutely fundamental. It cannot be accounted for in terms of anything else.”

Erwin Schrödinger

"I think I'll go and meet her," said Alice…

"You can't possibly do that," said the Rose, "I should advise you to walk the other way." This sounded nonsense to Alice, so she said nothing, but set off at once towards the Red Queen. To her surprise, she lost sight of her in a moment.

Lewis Carrol, "*Through the Looking Glass*"

Chapter 4: Consciousness

4.1. Chapter Introduction

In this chapter I move from the realm of broad systemic critique centered on the workplace to that which grounds the human qualities of choice, compassion, ethics, relationship, creativity, and imagination, all of which are required to propel society toward democracy and justice. As mentioned in Chapter One of this dissertation, it requires agency and intention, grounded within subjectivity, to challenge alienating conditions. These dimensions of being are found within the experience of consciousness. If there is anything that we might say is real and definitive about our experience in the world it is surely that of experience itself, or that we are conscious (Goff, 2017; Karman, 2011; Strawson, 2006). The fact of conscious experience itself is the foundation for anything that can be known. Even to deny the fact of consciousness (which some do, like the philosopher Daniel Dennett) or to explain it away as a species of illusion, one must be conscious to do so (Sheldrake, 2012). It is curious, then, that consciousness is so little discussed in psychological literature outside the field of consciousness studies.[39] It may be that the subject matter is too difficult to grasp. David Chalmers has famously called the subject of consciousness 'the hard problem', and for good reason (Chalmers, 1995). Philosophers, and others, cannot agree what consciousness is, where it is located, how it came to be, whether it is material or something unrelated to matter, why there is consciousness as an evolutionary fact in the first place, when it came into being, if it ever did, and how it aligns with nature. The philosopher Philip Goff puts the problem in focus when he comments that

> [m]ind and matter don't seem to fit in the same world; this is the essence of the mind-body problem. Space-filling solid stuff doesn't seem to belong with invisible inner-experiencing. The neural processing of the brain is best known through third-person scientific investigation, while the subjective first-person perspective of the mind is best known through introspection. How are we to make sense of these seemingly incongruous things being unified aspects of a single reality? (pp. 1-2)

[39] As I make clear later on, I make a distinction between the experience of consciousness, *experiencing itself* as it were, and the contents of consciousness, whether this be dreams, thoughts, feelings, memories, and so on. The latter have certainly been topics of analysis for psychology.

Hence, while the sciences have been very successful in explaining phenomena in third-person, empirical, and quantitative ways, it has been unable to match that success with consciousness due to its qualitative and first-person nature (Goff, 2017). Yet an account of consciousness must be given if one considers oneself a materialist, one of the most prominent strands of the modern neoliberal worldview, and one agrees that consciousnesses is indeed an actual experiential phenomenon in the material universe (Strawson, 2006).

As an aside, I do not intend in this chapter to wander too far into the areas of pantheism or panentheism, the more spiritually oriented perspectives of consciousness found the world over, except to draw relevant parallels to the panpsychic view I propose. I concentrate on a few assumptions which I believe are required for an appreciation of the main thrust of my argument that consciousness, and its place in the world (or is it the world's place in it?), is a vital and necessary component for positioning justice concerns within the helping professions and, more broadly, for an ethical and contrarian position against the capitalist appropriation of the field. In other words, I see a re-positioning of consciousness as a central feature of our understanding of reality as a means by which the helping professions, and counselling psychology specifically, may extricate themselves from the clutches of capitalism to provide a truly emancipatory service for people in distress.

First, as mentioned above, I would want to assert the uncontestable datum of consciousness itself, a fact that lies as the foundation of all our experience of the world. It is, therefore, a proper object[40] of study and indeed must be accounted for in any theory of the natural world and, by implication, the psychological and social world. The materialism of today's neoliberal world, which otherwise reduces nature and human beings to mechanistic, atomized, and determined resources, provides a primary site for analysis of the place of consciousness in reality. Despite materialists' tendency to address it as almost an afterthought (I shall talk more about emergentism a little later), it is clear that consciousness "is the obligatory starting point for any theory that can legitimately claim to be 'naturalistic' because experience is itself the fundamental given

[40] Of course, consciousness is not an object at all but pure subjectivity. Discussions of consciousness are difficult even in linguistic terms because of its unique nature. Consequently, upon review of the literature, one can discern different ways of speaking about consciousness, and one cannot help but think that people are often 'talking past' each other when the topic is discussed.

natural fact; it is a very old point that there is nothing more certain than the existence of experience" (Strawson et. al, 2006, p. 4). Consciousness should be seen as a phenomenon that invites study on its own terms and not reduced to the biological explanations of third-person observational science (Goff, 2017).

Second, in the interests of defining what I mean by consciousness, I would broadly agree that consciousness means that there is something that it is like to be a thing (Nagel, 1974), that there is an inner phenomenal life as well as an external noumenal one. This definition represents a simple dual-aspect monism, and although I am content with this precursory description for now, I will later make more of a distinction between levels of consciousness, rather than treating it as a single homogenous 'thing'.

Third, as indicated before, I propose that physicalism, or materialism (I use these terms interchangeably), currently fails to give an adequate account of consciousness. Physicalism is the notion that reality is fundamentally physical and that it can be explained exclusively within the methodologies of the physical sciences (Goff, 2017). This was probably the view of the world that Marx held (Foster, 2000), an understanding that the physical world preceded life, which depended on it, and that life preceded consciousness, which emerged from it (Collier, 2012). My argument will be that physicalism does not account for consciousness, nor can it, and that a new way of understanding of the relationship of matter to consciousness must be brought forward. Such a view goes beyond both the historically dualistic conceptions of mind and body, along with their difficulties in understanding how they might interact with one another, and the strict materialist monism of contemporary science, to postulating that, contrary to modern emergentist notions, mind is intrinsically fundamental to all matter. The implications of this are profound; for, if it follows that everything that is conscious is in fact alive, and that all matter is conscious, then, the universe is itself alive, and the recognition of this impacts not only the worlds of ontology and epistemology but also ethics and justice. I would first like to explore why emergentism does not provide a coherent account for the presence of consciousness and also why any materialist theory that proposes only physical properties in the world cannot explain the non-physical qualities of consciousness.

4.2. The Common View of Consciousness: Emergentism

The view common today among both scientists and the lay public is that consciousness is an epi-phenomenon of the brain. Brains are complex physical organs that, when sufficiently evolved, 'throw out' consciousness as a kind of after-effect of neurological processes. This conventional view is essentially dualistic in its understanding,[41]with modern versions suggesting that consciousness may have appeared suddenly or gradually, but only long after the appearance of matter and only as matter configured itself in complex and definitive ways, as in brains (Sheldrake, 2012). It is basically the idea that the mental emerges from the physical (Karman, 2011). These arguments are fundamentally based, then, on two main notions: that consciousness is a rare phenomenon found only in human beings and some other species, including higher primates and perhaps a few others, and that consciousness is dependent on, and a phenomenon of, the brain, which is to say that without brains there cannot be consciousness (Skrbina, 2007).

The philosopher Galen Strawson (2006) summarizes the emergent point of view as follows:

> Experiential phenomena are emergent phenomena. Consciousness properties, experience properties, are emergent properties of wholly and utterly non-conscious, non-experiential phenomena. Physical stuff in itself, in its basic nature, is indeed a wholly non-conscious, non-experiential phenomenon. Nevertheless when parts of it combine in certain ways, experiential phenomena 'emerge'. Ultimates in themselves are wholly non-conscious, non-experiential phenomena. Nevertheless, when they combine in certain ways, experiential phenomena 'emerge'. (p. 12)

This view makes clear that consciousness is not inherent within matter itself but arises when material conditions are arranged in a specific manner.

There have been a number of physicalist theorists in recent years who have argued against the idea of emergentism. Strawson himself is one of them. Strawson describes himself as a materialist and yet he has provided the most coherent case against the idea of emergentism (Strawson, 2006). Emergentism as it relates to the appearance of consciousness is usually likened to many phenomena in nature whose

[41] A strictly materialist view of consciousness is that it is identical with the brain, that the observed electrical activity between synapses *are themselves* the experience of, say, the colour red. But even scientists, and certainly most laypersons, have a more descriptively dualist understanding of the mind's relationship to the brain. They are 'closet dualists' (Goff, 2019b).

existence arises from interactions between physical entities. Strawson uses the example of water, for example, to demonstrate that although liquidity is not a characteristic of the molecules that compose water, or of any elementals that form them, nevertheless liquidity emerges from H2O molecules when they are combined in certain ways. It is not there at a fundamental level, and then suddenly it appears (Strawson, 2013).

Liquidity, in other words, consists of, and is dependent on, lower level physical phenomena such as shape, size, mass charge, number, position, and motion (Karman, 2011). When these attributes are configurated in certain specific ways, liquidity manifests itself. The quality of liquidity is a non-experiential attribute arising from other more fundamental but equally non-experiential attributes. Emergentism attempts to apply the same analogy to consciousness but fails to do so in an intelligible way. Non-experiential ultimates cannot give rise to experience (Karman, 2012). Any emergence from other properties cannot be 'brute' (Strawson, 2006), which is to say that it cannot be arbitrary. There must be an 'in-virtue' relationship so that there is everything to do with one phenomenon that allows it to give rise to another of the same kind (Strawson, 2006). In the case of consciousness, it is impossible for something that is first-person and experiential to emerge from something that is merely dead matter and wholly insentient (de Quincey, 2010). Under normal circumstances, emergent phenomena are entirely dependent on those phenomena from which they arise; at bottom they can be reduced to much the same thing, as wine derived from water can be reduced to the same molecular parts. Yet, there is no good sense in which the experience of consciousness could be derived from matter that is defined as being absolutely unconscious.

4.3. Consciousness as Non-physical

Experience, or consciousness, is unlike any other phenomena that we encounter in the world. It is the ever-present basis of every experience that we have, whether of the world, our bodies, or our minds (and by this I mean the contents of our minds like thoughts and feelings); whereas normal physical objects come and go within our experience and seem themselves to change and transform, consciousness does not. Not only is it incomprehensible to suggest that consciousness arises from the physical, but it is also difficult to understand in what sense we are obliged to think it *must* do so since its qualities are distinctly different from that of the physical world. There are a

number of arguments within Western philosophy that suggest consciousness cannot be physical.

4.3.1. The Zombie Argument

The philosopher David Chalmers has argued that one must make a distinction between facts regarding conscious experience and facts relating to physical entities, and thus if physical facts do not necessarily lead to facts regarding consciousness then we can assume that consciousness is something different than the mere physical (Karman, 2011). The zombie argument is based on an earlier form proposed by René Descartes, and is a variety of the 'conceivability argument', an assertion that links conceivability to possibility (Goff, 2017). The Cartesian conceivability argument makes the claim that: a) it is conceivable that mind could exist apart from a brain or body; b) anything that can be conceived is possible; c) it is therefore possible that a mind might exist apart from a brain or body. Since it is possible that mind may exist apart from the brain or body, then one may then conclude that the mind is not identical to the brain or body (Goff, 2017). The zombie version of this argument outlined by Chalmers suggests that because there could conceivably be a world where beings exist in every way similar to humans but lacking consciousness, it is possible that such beings might exist. These 'zombies' would act and speak exactly as we do but they would lack conscious experience, which is to say that there would be nothing like for them to be themselves (as per Nagel, 1974). If this were true then we would have to conclude that consciousness does not necessarily derive from physical matter or complexity and that it is, therefore, of a different 'substance' than matter. This is because if the physical facts of the fully developed human brain constitutively grounds the reality of consciousness, then it must follow that, when those physical facts are realized (as in brains), consciousness must be present. Consequently, if it is true that there is the possibility of a zombie world, then consciousness cannot be said to be grounded in the physical facts, and so a pure physicalism must be false (Goff, 2017).

This argument essentially states that since a zombie world is not only conceivable but also possible then consciousness need not follow based on the exact same physical facts of the experiential world that we know (Karman, 2011). It can only be concluded, then, that consciousness is in essence different than physical properties and relationships within brains or bodies.

4.3.2. The Black and White Mary Argument

The black and white Mary argument is a contemporary version of an older argument in philosophy known as the knowledge argument. It is a reply to the common objection that while we do not at present understand how the brain generates consciousness, we will in the future indeed be able to give such an account once a more complete knowledge of the physical facts are known. Mary is described as a brilliant scientist whose specialty is colour vision. She knows everything there is to possibly know about colour: she understands the physiology of sight, the neurobiology of the brain, all the chemical and biological processes that are involved with the formation of colour, and so on. There is nothing that Mary does not know about the production of colour vision. There is one important and interesting detail about Mary, however; she has lived her entire life within the confines of a black and white room, and so has never herself experienced colour. Everything for her is perceived in black, white, or shades of grey. One day Mary leaves her room and for the first time she sees the rich colour of a beautiful red rose. In this moment Mary has a new experience and therefore new knowledge. Despite her complete knowledge of the physiology of what occurs when a person sees red, Mary has not had experience of red. This experience demonstrates, according to the argument, that although Mary might know all the physical facts, she has an experience that is beyond what the physical sciences can describe. It is concluded from this, then, that physicalism must be false (Goff, 2018).

This argument once again demonstrates that consciousness cannot be thought of as physical, or, in this case, derived from physical explanations of the world, and that although there are physical goings-on that correlate with the experience of a conscious state, the latter state is not dependant on physical processes to exist. It also serves as a counter-argument to those who claim that in the future, once we know everything about what happens in brains, we shall simultaneously know what consciousness is.

4.3.3. Language Argument

Strawson’s language argument, as described by Karman (2012), states that science is designed to describe the world of matter and that conceivably science will one day be able to describe all material properties and relationships to the smallest detail because the universe is made of nothing other than matter. It is the scientific project that

it knows the world objectively through its claims which are fundamentally linguistic in nature. However, Strawson points out that linguistic agreement does not mean that there is a comparable experience of the object, and that indeed we can never know if my taste of jam is the same as yours. Experiences of objects are not testable objectively, but only comparable through verbal report (Karman, 2012). They are by nature indescribable and, furthermore, since they are primary, they cannot be subdivided into smaller components, the usual methodology of science to understand and describe material phenomena. The conclusion is, then, that since subjective experience, and so subjectivity in general, cannot be captured objectively, which is the method of science, consciousness cannot be physical (Karman, 2012). I might suggest that, even though the experiential content of consciousness cannot be precisely compared to another's experience, the experiencing itself is the same in both observers and is, in fact, the most intimately shared experience, the one thing we can share for certain. In this case it is not *what* I experience, but *that* I experience.

4.4. Alternatives to Emergentism

If we reject the notion that consciousness is a mere epiphenomenon of arrangements of complex physical structures like brains, what then can be proposed as an alternative explanation for the presence of consciousness? And if consciousness is not physical, but instead consists of experientiality or 'mind-stuff', then how do we avoid a strict dualism?

I am in favour of a dual-aspect monism which suggests that if experiential consciousness cannot emerge from what is otherwise dead matter, despite being arranged in complex patterns, then consciousness must already be present within matter itself in some form, as an intrinsic property. It is this inherent 'thisness', its subjective intrinsicness, that establishes the uniqueness of each thing from each other (Karman, 2012). I believe that the notion that consciousness is an inherent part of the physical constitution of the real is the most parsimonious and simple explanation given for its presence (Goff, 2017). The question may be turned back on itself: why insist on believing that matter is fundamentally non-experiential and that experience somehow emerges as if by magic from utterly non-experiential stuff? (Strawson, 2006).

4.5. Consciousness as Essence

Goff (2018) points out that physics has been very good in describing the relationships of fields and particles one to another, but has failed to provide an account of their essence. It can give an account of the causal structure of materiality but is unable to provide an explanation of the intrinsic nature of the object of observation. Physics can, for example, provide us with explanations of the behaviour of an electron, describing it in terms of mass, velocity, and charge, but the explanations around what each of these properties are depend, in turn, on accounts of their functions, what the electron does through them, but not on what the electron itself intrinsically is. In other words, there is something missing within explanations of this sort because “intuitively, wherever there is mathematico-causal structure, there must be some underlying concrete reality realizing that structure. Physics leaves us completely in the dark about the underlying concrete reality of the physical universe” (Goff, 2017, Chapter 6, p. 3).

I agree with Goff that the unaccounted for essence is, in fact, consciousness itself, an absolutely real phenomena which cannot, however, be accessed through the objective methods of analytical science. The empirical method has worked very well for science and has resulted in many successes of explanation within all the various disciplines. These methods we might call third-person methods. Consciousness, however, is a very different sort of object, simply because it is pure subject. It is not accessible to third-person methodologies. Conversely, it can only be accessed through the direct experience of the conscious subject, the first-person. There have been various responses to the abject failure of science to date to explain what consciousness is or how it comes about. Emergentism for many is unacceptable as it cannot logically account for the appearance of consciousness without appealing to a form of magical thinking. Indeed, as indicated before, some have claimed that, despite our current state of knowledge of the brain and its functioning, more neuro-science needs to be done before we can really give an account of consciousness (Goff, 2017).

However, many philosophers and others reject the proposition that consciousness is yet another object of study as we might study any other object in the world through the scientific method. Consciousness is indeed a datum in its own right but access to understanding it cannot be discovered from observations and experiments, or an accumulation of more knowledge (Goff, 2017). In other words, a strict materialism

subscribes to the view that all reality can be understood in terms of the physical sciences but because this form of physicalism is unable to properly account for consciousness it must therefore be mistaken in its assumptions.

One objection to the argument that the sciences are unable to explore the being-ness of things is that there is nothing outside the relationships and functions that things display. Thus, objects in the world *are* their relationships, there is no essence.[42] In philosophy this view is known as causal structuralism and it is essentially the same view that contemporary post-modern and post-structuralists hold, evidenced in much of the social constructionist literature in psychology (see, for example, Gergen, 2011). Casual structuralists propose that each and every property of a thing is a pure causal power; however, it is difficult to understand how our understanding of the nature of a causal power can be known without reference to properties that are not causal powers (Goff, 2017). If we describe what an object is in terms of other causal properties, then these in turn require explanations which creates an infinite regress with no understanding of the nature of the original object of study.

Another way to approach this is from the perspective of appearances and reality. There is a very real sense, of course, that it is not consciousness that is difficult to grasp but rather matter itself, which presents as inscrutable and, to a great degree, unknowable. What is the difference between the appearance of an object as opposed to the reality of it? The real world is substantial in that it is grounded in substantival properties. An object is real because it is solid, for example. Solidity has historically been viewed as a primary property of a material object, and a sure indicator of the reality of the object as opposed to some sort of illusion. An object may have colour or shape, for example, but if it lacked solidity we might be dealing with a mere appearance. However, the problem with solidity is that it cannot be established on its own terms; that is, it can only be known if the other objects around it are themselves solid and it is able to keep them out. But then the problem becomes of establishing *their* solidity (Mathews, 2003). Here again is a problem of infinite regress with the result that we can never know what gives any object its reality. When we consider any object “we can see its color, feel its impenetrability, and so on, but there is a sense in which these are surface qualities only

[42] Compare this to those writers who reject the notion that Marx held a conception of an essential human nature, and had instead replaced it with the ‘ensemble of social relations’ themselves. See Geras (2016) for a review of these arguments.

or mere appearances. The inner reality of body, the 'thing-in-itself', is never revealed" (Mathews, 2003, p. 31). The experiential effect is that matter becomes dead, a kind of phantasm, an appearance but at the same time nothing in itself, and, thus, the notion that things are present-for-themselves as subjects is rejected. Alternatively, to acknowledge the subjectivity of things positions consciousness as their intrinsic, essential nature, and, furthermore, places it as pervasive throughout matter. The dualism of appearance and reality are transcended within such a paradigm. This is not necessarily to assert that every bit of matter is itself an experiencing subject, but only that there is an inherent 'inwardness' via consciousness, a subjectival component in all things, which may or may not manifest as a subject proper (Mathews, 2003). It is within the experience of subjectivity, the inner sense of being present to ourselves as particular embodied beings, that fosters an assurance that we are real and "that renders the world at large real as opposed to mere externalized husk or insubstantial phantom" (Mathews, 2003, p. 32).

4.6. Panpsychism

Panpsychism is the view that consciousness in one form or another pervades all matter in the universe. de Quincey (2012) defines panpsychism as

> a cosmological and ontological theory that proposes all objective bodies (objects) in the universe, including those we usually classify as "inanimate," possess an interior, subjective reality (they are also subjects). In other words, there is something it feels like from within to be a body (of any kind). Panpsychism, thus, presents us with a view of nature consisting universally of materially real bodies with an interior or experiential reality. All bodies, therefore, are in some respects both material and psychic. (de Quincey, 2012, Chapter 6, para. 6)

Panpsychism says that it is consciousness that is the essence of matter, what matter is in its intrinsic nature. Consciousness gives matter its sentience, which grounds itself within subjectivity. Subjectivity is the essence of all sentient experience (de Quincey, 2012). Panpsychism is an ancient world-view found historically in varying forms within many cultures and philosophies.[43] Indeed, our modern conceptions of a dead and merely material world are relatively new in the history of ideas. Panpsychism represents a radical (at least for us in the modern West) re-imagining of the relationship of mind to

[43] David Skrbina's book '*Panpsychism in the West*' gives a very detailed history of panpsychism and provides various descriptions of the many different forms of panpsychic ideas, both ancient and contemporary.

matter. Since the time of Descartes various forms of dualism have dominated both philosophical and scientific discourse. With dualism, of course, came numerous philosophical problems, such as how a mind can affect and interact with a physical body. This problem has never been sufficiently answered even today. Hence, there have been various attempts to circumvent this problem by means of some form of philosophic and scientific reductionism, that is, reducing the mind to brain states, or to forms of eliminativism, which attempt to argue that mind is a kind of illusion and not real as other phenomena are real. Apart from our intuitively common sense objections to such notions, there are good reasons to believe philosophically that such arguments are simply false (Nagel, 2012). Panpsychism offers a perspective that problematizes not the mind but our understanding of what matter intrinsically is. It refuses to reduce matter to mind (idealism), but instead maintains that matter and mind are different but inseparable components of the same reality. All matter has the dual aspects of both subjectivity and objectivity; first-personhood and third-personhood; experientiality and non-experientiality (Skrbina, 2009). All matter is conscious in some fashion all the way down to the ultimate foundational particles. Thus, panpsychism is a monistic paradigm, neither materialist nor idealist, but incorporating aspects of both (Goff, 2019a).[44]

Yet, historically panpsychism in all its forms was not merely a theoretical interpretation of how the world functions. Rather, it has always invited, through its acknowledgement of an all-pervading experiential awareness, an engagement with the world in specific ways. For example, the Pythagorean religious-philosophical tradition was a way of life. With its ontological emphasis on patterns or form over material substance, it gave rise to an epistemology that regarded matter as containing spirit or consciousness, and so was considered sacred, a reflection of a more profound level of nature. Just as importantly, however, it encouraged a transformation of being in light of this knowledge. In comparison, Descartes's ontology, prevalent even today, focused on the primacy of material substance, which lacked any inherent consciousness, and was rendered completely inert and lifeless. Such a perspective conjured very different ways of being in the world (de Quincey, 2006). This point cannot be overlooked. In contrast to the ways in which pantheistic and panpsychic worldviews cultivated ways of being in the

[44] There are many detailed and sophisticated forms of panpsychism. The important consideration in terms of my argument in this dissertation is that consciousness is viewed as inherent within all elemental physical particles and, furthermore, that it is not merely another additional property, like mass or charge, but that it is the intrinsic nature of those properties, that is, that mass and charge *from the inside* are forms of consciousness (Goff, 2019).

world that honoured it as a living, vital, and meaningful entity, generating practices, traditions, and social mores that reflected such understandings, the dualistic Cartesian notions of a dead and de-spirited earth, fortified by a novel rationalism which combined science with philosophy (Guerra, 2013), paved the way for a reckless capitalism whose substantive contribution was to enrich the capitalist classes at the expense of both the working classes and the earth itself. Let me take this opportunity to expand on the difference between these two dominant world-views and their effects.

The panpsychic idea that the world is alive, sentient, or possessing soul or spirit, is an ancient one and found in all cultures and societies. Many societies considered nature to be the Great Mother and thus full of spirit, life, consciousness, purpose, and meaning. Nature was an innate impulse or power (Sheldrake, 1994) and was seen to be personified as Mother Nature, the source, sustainer, and ending of all life. Within Mother Nature existed the celestial bodies and the non-human bodies, like the rivers and mountains on Earth, all seen to be themselves divine and thus fully alive and conscious in their own ways and after their own purposes. Furthermore, Mother Earth was the source of universal laws, the source of nature and its aspects of time, eternity, birth, and death, and also the basis for moral qualities such as truth, beauty, justice, and love (Sheldrake,1994).

This worldview is known as animism, and although this word has been critiqued as being reflective of the colonizing practices of 18th and 19th century anthropologists who used the term in a rather disparaging way to describe the societies they studied as primitive and backwards (Harvey, 2017), the term has been rescued in recent times and redefined in a manner that properly reflects the actual worldviews of the people both past and present who hold such understandings of the world (Bird-David, 1999; Ingold, 2006). Thus, animists are those who see the world as full of persons, with humans being only one variety, and that these beings live their lives in relationship with each other. The animist always seeks to be a good person in a world of personhood, seeking out nurturing and respectful relationships (Harvey, 2017). The ancient animist conception, therefore, not only saw the world as alive and conscious, but as necessarily full of relationships and connections, a world of human and non-human entities communicating and being in communion with each other. The recognition and honouring of personhood in the other-than-human creation explicitly invites a worldview that fills all things with intentionality, agency, and the desire to reach out to others in exchange (Harvey, 2017).

Most importantly, it is a worldview that forms the basis for the establishment of ethical, moral, and just interchanges with all things.[45]

Up until medieval times in the West, the philosophy of nature was predominantly animistic with an understanding that soul was not a mere part of the living being but that beings lived and moved within soul (Sheldrake, 1994). Animals too were ensouled beings, the word for animal coming from the Latin '*anima*', soul. Humans were connected from below not only to the animalistic aspect of soul, the repository of the instincts and passions, but also to higher levels of soul, the realms of reason, thinking, and choice (Sheldrake, 1994). Such notions of the human soul provided both an unambiguous connection to the rest of nature, but also defined the uniqueness of each aspect of the world. It also upheld the idea that each thing in itself is a microcosmic embodiment of the macrocosm, so that the 'behaviour' of the heavens had a direct effect on the lives of human beings (Sheldrake, 1994). The understanding that human beings were intimately connected in a reciprocal manner to both other creatures and to all of nature generated moral and ethical imperatives which structured people's lives.

On the other hand, dualism, a philosophical tradition that most famously informed the scientific paradigm of Descartes, can be traced back to Plato in the West and to Samkhya Hinduism around 1000 BCE in the East (Skrbina, 2009). This is the view that the mind/consciousness, or soul, is separate and distinct from the body, although it does interact with the body as long as it is alive. It was Plato in the 4th century BCE who proposed that the cosmos could be separated between the realm of transcendental, and perfect, Forms and the realm of mundane, everyday, and imperfect matter. Although his student Aristotle attempted to mitigate his teacher's strict dualism, Plato's version heavily influenced Western thought through the Neoplatonists and into Christianity, particularly that of St. Augustine. In the West, with the advent of the Copernican Revolution in the 16th century, the belief in the cosmos as a living and sentient being began to be replaced with the idea that the cosmos was in fact a machine, without life or sentience, without purpose or meaning, and was instead constituted of lifeless matter, administered by laws set down by a deistic God (Sheldrake, 1994). As mentioned, this worldview

[45] Val Plumwood (1993) argues against using consciousness as the sole criterion for asserting subjectivity in matter. She sees consciousness, intentionality, experience/sentience, imagination, reason, goal directedness as different ways to imagine mind within the non-human realm. She, therefore, proposes a weak panpsychism wherein only mindlike qualities are found in nature, not a pure experientiality.

came into prominence through scientific thinkers like Descartes in the 17th century who advocated for a strict dualism of mind and body. Descartes' cosmos was one of mathematical and mechanistic precision. Spirit, soul, or consciousness was removed from the cosmos, and indeed from the human body itself, where it could only interact with the body through the pineal gland. For Descartes human and non-human bodies were mere machines living in an inert universe, with life and consciousness only showing up in rare instances (Sheldrake, 1994).

Isaac Newton (1643 - 1727) furthered Descartes' dualistic project, but now within the world of physics. A deistic and remote God set in motion the cause and effect exchange of physical forces, influencing objects that were self-contained and individualized, and which were separated from one another through dead space, and which could only interact through direct contact (de Quincey, 2012). Newton's universe was truly mechanical, with no allowance for creativity, freedom, or choice. All movement in the cosmos was determined by mechanical causal sequence, which held out the hope of theories that could capture the nature of everything within them.

The continued scientific emphasis on matter and material forces and laws were seen in the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin in the 1800s. Utilizing the mechanistic and deterministic theories of the new emerging materialism, Darwin proposed that all animal and plant species existed as a result of natural selection, a kind of chance variation in mutations within species, an interplay between organism and environment (de Quincey, 2012), and certainly lacking any teleological properties like meaning or intention. As with animism, this, too, had its own moral and ethical ramifications.

Some type of Cartesian dualism has been the major philosophical position within both philosophical circles and certainly within the popular mind of the modern Western world. Even today, despite materialist perspectives on the relation of the mind to the brain, the most crude form of which is that the mind is the brain itself, or that the mind is an illusory epi-phenomena of brain activity, we still easily talk of the mind's influence on the body, and vice versa, as though they are two distinct ontological categories. Notwithstanding dualism's profound influence in much of our thinking, the manner and mechanism by which the mind interacts with a brain remains one of dualisms major philosophical problems.

Moreover, the separation of mind from body presents some other important challenges, not the least of which are its moral and ethical ramifications. Whereas the older Platonic forms of dualism invited epistemologies that encouraged transformational change within individuals and societies, Cartesian dualism eventually aligned itself with the political and scientific movements of the times that emphasized the production and accumulation of capital. This occurred because this form of dualism, as we have seen, proposed a split between humans and an inert and lifeless mechanistic world. The consequence of this separation created a value hierarchy wherein the soul had value because of its eternal and divine nature, but matter had none because of its temporal and earthly nature. It led to the notion that the world was a site for human consumption, and, in fact, only had value to the extent that it was given value by humans. It also established the idea of the superiority of humans to all else (Skrbina, 2009).

With agency, purpose, choice, meaning, and intention, traditionally thought to be attributes of the soul, all effectively removed from nature by science and philosophy, the conditions were ripe for the development of political and economic systems that incorporated these worldviews to their advantage (Loy, 2018). In fact, Descartes was explicit in his intentions that his insights into the nature of the world and humans' place in it were to make humans the lords and possessors of the natural world (Sheldrake, 1994), a reflection of Francis Bacon's similar assertion that it was science's function to 'put nature to the rack' (de Quincey, 2012). Indeed, Descartes thought that mastery of the world by self-interested individuals was the purpose of a person's life (Guerra, 2013). Thus, within these materialistic approaches to the cosmos lay the philosophical grounding for the development of capitalism as an economic and social system. Speaking of the drive of capital to produce bourgeois society, Marx comments in the *Grundrisse* that

> for the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production. (Marx, Grundrisse, p. 336)

The materialist and mechanistic understanding of nature and of the creatures within nature dovetailed neatly with the late 19th century drive to treat human workers as mechanized appendages of the means of production. This philosophical position, along with an increasingly materialistic science, with its progressive de-spiriting of the natural

world, was readily assimilated by the capitalist classes to further their expansionist quest for ever-increasing profits, justifying their rapacious greed based on the fact that the world was a dead and spiritless resource to be exploited for the benefit of themselves. The dismissal of ancient ideas of the ever-present, immanent deity, the idea that everything was alive and had soul,[46] reduced the world to a machine, and a purposeless and meaningless one at that (de Quincey, 2010). The demotion of consciousness (or what we might call soul) from matter, made the commodification of persons and the environment more easily achieved and rationalized. As de Quincey (2010) points out, the world's

> only value was its potential for exploitation by science and technology to serve the functions of industry, commerce, and government. In such a world, guided by such motivations, it should be no surprise if our collective actions - as nations, as governments, as businesses, even as individuals - turn out to be pathological. They are pathological because they take no account of the profound interdependence of living systems, because they take no account of consciousness or experience inherent in nature. (Introduction, Project, para. 11)

The exorcism of consciousness was the necessary accomplice to capitalism's growth, and a precursor to the appearance of many modern social ills, especially alienation and mental health issues.

Having removed consciousness from the purview of serious scientific concern, or at the very least reducing it to a late-stage epiphenomena of brain states, the effect for society was the removal from the world of meaning, purpose, intentionality, and goals. Justice, taken in the broad sense of upholding what is morally right or good, and which was formerly an attribute of the indwelling and all-pervasive spirit itself, must now be socially-constructed since a dead and insentient world is devoid of inherent worth and meaning. The meaning constructed, however, was almost always anthropocentric and, as the 19th century came and went, was inevitably framed in terms of capital accumulation. Thus, with the rise of capitalism alongside materialist conceptions of the world and of society, it became evermore the case that meaning no longer flowed from metaphysical foundations but rather from "expressions of an economic philosophy based

[46] I use the terms soul, spirit, and awareness as equivalent to consciousness. This equivalency is not intended to make ontological statements particular to these terms (many writers do make clear distinctions between them), but only to reflect a general historic difference between them as a group and matter per se. It does not affect the thrust of my argument regarding the unique nature of consciousness. For a discussion of the uses of these terms, and others, see Skrbina (2007), particularly pages 15-19.

on a materialistic metaphysics that denies any foundation to goals, purposes, and values - other than biologically driven preferences or the relativity of social power plays" (de Quincey, 2012, Chapter 1, para. 12). Nevertheless, despite materialist's claims to the contrary, teleology was never really removed from the natural world; rather, it had merely been replaced by capitalist ideology with its advocacy of the 'invisible hand' and 'market forces'.

4.7. Panpsychism as the Re-spiriting of Nature

For the last few hundred years, most in educated Western society have taken for granted the prevailing worldview of materialism, both in its manifestation as a physicalist understanding of the cosmos, and in its practical, economic, and political manifestation as the capitalist mode of production (Sheldrake, 1994; Skrbina, 2009). There are three main proposals made by a pure physical materialism: that reality consists of one 'thing', matter; that it is objective and accessible through third-party observation and exploration; and that mind cannot be found in matter, that matter is utterly non-experiential (Skrbina, 2009). However, if we acknowledge that mind or consciousness is a datum in its own right, that it is a real phenomenon, then materialism must give an account of it within the terms of the three proposals made above. The problem is that it cannot. As previously noted, aside from the ontological subjectivity of consciousness in comparison to the objectivity of the rest of the physical universe, we have no credible explanations of how consciousness emerges from non-conscious matter, nor for what accounts for our specific qualitative experience of the world it reveals. Physicalist explanations cannot coherently make sense of intention since the particles and forces that make up the material world are thought to be inherently inert and, therefore, not purposeful. Consciousness seems to elude the analytic abilities of objective science to capture and explain it (Skrbina, 2009).

There are three other possible paradigms that present themselves, however, when materialism's core assumptions are rejected. The first are various forms of idealism, postulating the opposite of materialism and avoiding the necessity of explaining how matter and mind are related, by claiming that everything is itself only consciousness (Henry, 2005; Ward, 2010). One may view Hegel, for example, as an idealist, and it was this philosophical approach that Karl Marx eventually discarded in favour of a strictly materialist position. Another possibility is to argue for a neutral monism which proposes

that both mind and matter originate from another source beyond them both.[47] A third prospect is a dual-aspect monism, a panpsychism that suggests that reality is comprised of both a physical and an experiential aspect (Skrbina, 2009). This explanation is the most appealing to me because it is the most parsimonious, a theory that eliminates both the problems associated with the strict materialist view of the genesis of experientiality from non-experiential matter and dualism's notoriously difficult predicament of how the insubstantial mind interacts with the material brain (Goff, 2017). Panpsychism in the form of a dual-aspect monism proposes that consciousness is naturally present within matter from the lowest forms right up to the highest. As a consequence, the existence of a conscious world invites new ways of being and relating to the world and to one another.

Moreover, consciousness cannot be thought of as one single 'thing', manifesting only on the level of 'there is something that it's like to be that thing' (Nagel, 1974). In human beings specifically, the term consciousness would not only entail both conscious awareness and what is known as the unconscious mind, but also the qualia of mind like intentionality, attention, awareness, and cognition. There are levels of complexity to this consciousness so that notions of divisions, for example, between the unconscious and the conscious, or aspects of experience such as emotion versus reason, are replaced by an understanding of a range of qualitatively different mental states on an ontological continuum, from deep, unaware states to profoundly meditative ones (Skrbina, 2009). Moreover, the recognition of experientiality in the world and also of our own access to multiple levels of consciousness within ourselves demands novel ways of manifesting justice, care, and equality that align with our understanding. If we were to have a candidate for the old notion of the soul, of an essence, then it would be consciousness. It is with panpsychism that the ensoulment of the cosmos returns and with it the revitalization of the world. The world becomes alive again, a living creation filled with intentions and meaning, a place of connection and relationship, where communication and communion become the same thing.

4.8. Consciousness 'All the Way Down'

When speaking of panpsychist approaches to the nature of reality, it is often said that there is consciousness all the way down, down, that is, to the basic ultimates of

[47] This view seems the most receptive to panentheistic ideas and to understanding consciousness as existing beyond matter also, a theory for which I have much affinity.

material existence (de Quincey, 2012). Until recently, however, the notion of consciousness being present in other than human beings, the higher level apes, and perhaps in some mammals like dogs and cats, was itself considered controversial (Theise & Kafatos, 2013). As pointed out previously, Descartes famously thought that animals were devoid of consciousness, mere automatons with no sentience, a fact that presumably allowed him to indulge in vivisections on live animals without much thought (Sheldrake, 2012). Despite an inability to know what it is like to be them, as Nagel might say, in recent years the empirical evidence for consciousness in non-human animals, and even plants, has, nevertheless, grown. Let me give some examples.

John Marzluff, a Professor of Wildlife Science at the University of Washington, describes the uncanny ability of crows to relate to each other and their environments in ways that can only suggest the existence of a high level of consciousness. He notes that

> corvids assume characteristics that were once ascribed only to humans, including self-recognition, insight, revenge, tool use, mental time travel, deceit, murder, language, play, calculated risk taking, social learning, and traditions. We are different, but by degree…these animals, which we often take for granted and aggressively combat, really are thinking and reasoning in ways that are more similar to our own than many would care to admit. (Marzluff & Angell, 2012, p. 198)

Crucially, however, he points out that crows and human beings have co-evolved and that not only have the existence and presence of crows in the lives of humans through the ages affected human culture, but human existence has in turn affected crow culture. Our own mental processes may have been deeply affected through our history with relating to crows because the views we have of crows in connection to death, thievery, planning, and so on are deeply grounded within our memory (Marzluff & Angell, 2012).

For many of us, the claim that crows are conscious would seem uncontested. Yet researchers are making interesting discoveries about behaviours in animals that may further challenge our limited understanding of the pervasiveness of conscious states. In a recent and controversial study published in the *PLOS Biology*, the authors found evidence to suggest that a small species of fish called the cleaner wrasse was able to pass the so-called mirror test, which has been used for decades as one of the foremost measures of animal intelligence. The testing demonstrated that these fish passed all behavioural components including “(i) social reactions towards the reflection, (ii)

repeated idiosyncratic behaviours towards the mirror, and (iii) frequent observation of their reflection" (Kohda et al., 2019, p. 1). The opposition to some of the possible conclusions regarding the consciousness of these animals has been considerable, most of which reflects a continued speciesism within the scientific community (Devlin, 2019) but it is the response of one of the main authors, Alex Jordan, which is relevant to this discussion. It was his view that the study raised issues around the welfare of fish. He was concerned that humans not lose their sense of empathy toward creatures that look different from us but that are demonstrably sentient and that our current fishing practices must change in light of this fact (Devlin, 2019). It is clear that in the minds of at least these authors the recognition of the presence of consciousness underlying states of feeling and pain leads them to endorse an ethic of care and, indeed, justice.

Some scientists make the case for the existence of consciousness in plants. Plant physiologist Stefano Mancuso believes that plants possess intelligence, learning, memory, and communication, despite the obvious fact that they do not possess brains. Making the point that, again, due the inherent speciesism within the human scientific method, it is very difficult for us to comprehend the possibility that other life forms may have attributes once only thought to be possessed by human beings, Mancuso & Viola (2015) comment:

> The same kind of problems surface when intelligence is spoken of in reference to organisms without a brain, such as - excluding plants for the moment - bacteria, protozoa, and molds. Although some (bacteria and protozoa) are so simple as to be composed of only one cell, they too nevertheless display behavior that - if their size were more impressive and, above all, if they had a brain - we wouldn't hesitate to term intelligent: amoebas solve mazes, while molds can map out a territory more efficiently than any software invented by human beings. However, in these organisms as in plants, our brain bias leads us to deny the existence of any sort of thinking capacity - an attitude that seems based more on traditions and preconceptions than on scientific reasoning. (p. 141)

But Manusco goes further in his theorizing by asking whether plants are conscious. Basing his understanding of what constitutes consciousness on the definition of the physicist Michio Kaku, who operationalizes consciousness as the ability to build a

model of oneself in relation to space, time, and other organisms, Mancuso argues that his research indicates plants are indeed conscious.[48][49]

4.9. Is Consciousness One (No-)Thing?

It may be that just as there are different levels of consciousness within humans, there are spectrums of consciousness throughout nature (Karman, 2003). This would mean that as organisms evolve and become more complex their consciousness and ability to experience also becomes more complex (Theise & Kafatos, 2013). Thus, simple organisms may have a very weak, rarefied consciousness (Karman, 2003, p. 14), with more complexity resulting in increasingly sophisticated experiential forms of subjectivity (Strawson, 2006).

My own view is that this understanding of consciousness has it a bit backwards. I think it is more likely that there is a universal fundamental consciousness that is present in and through the cosmos, but which is manifested in varying ways according to the complexity of the object or organism. Many refined and elegant understandings of consciousness from this perspective come from the Eastern Vedantic traditions. These traditions, although themselves complex and varied, present nuanced possibilities for viewing consciousness. One such conception is that the individual human consciousness, viewed, as it were, from within, is made of five *koshas*, or bodies, which are the temporary sheaths of the soul. These are the *annaya kosha*, or physical, material body, the *pranamaya kosha*, or energy body which imbues the physical body with life force, the *manomaya kosha* which is the mental body, comprising thoughts and emotions reflective of the interplay between the mind and the external world, the *vijnanamaya kosha* which is the intuitive body that reflects our spiritual experience, and finally *anandamaya kosha*, a bliss body reflective of the soul (Prakash, 1998). Although these various bodies may each represent evolutionary aspects of consciousness, it must be noted that they are not only temporary but surround the soul (that is, for our purposes, pure or fundamental consciousness), which is conceived to be central and timeless. In other words, these are all manifestations within consciousness of various

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[48] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBGt5OeAQFk

[49] Research by Gagliano, Vyazovskiy, Borbély, Grimonprez and Depczynski (2016) interestingly describes the acquisition of learned behaviour in garden pea plants in terms normally associated with the presence of consciousness. Citing the plants' ability to 'learn', 'choose', 'locate', and 'remember', their experimental results show how the presence of associative learning as an adaptive mechanism exists in both plants and animals.

states and conditions including states of mind and experience, but are not themselves original consciousness, the primordial ground and basis of subjectivity (Theise & Kafatos, 2016).

Historically there have been similar conceptualizations in the West. Sheldrake (1994) outlines the hierarchical levels of Robert Fludd (1574 -1637) who proposed a Pure Mind which was the opening to the Divine; the active intellect, the primary vehicle of Mind; the Rational Spirit, containing Mind and Intellect and opening to Reason; the Middle Soul, containing the Rational Spirit, Mind, and Intellect; the Vital Light in the Mind, or the Middle Soul swimming in ethereal fluid; and, finally, the Body, receptacle of all things.

Fundamental consciousness is, by these understandings, the soul, the center, a pure subject which, as such, cannot be described as an object. Being beyond description it is quality-less, and without attributes, and thus considered empty. In Indian Vedantic terms this is the nomenclature given to *Brahman*, the Supreme (Wilber, 1979). Rather than being, then, the most primitive state of consciousness, the first-person experience of consciousness is in fact the all-aware reality present in all things, each of which, according to their own nature and form *limit* pure subjectivity, depending on the complexity of their evolutionary development. Consciousness itself does not evolve, only its various contents and manifestations do.[50]

If consciousness is present throughout matter and not solely the property of human beings and their near relatives, what are the ethical and moral consequences of such an understanding? Primarily, it is a view of the world which presents itself as alive and sentient in a wonderfully diverse multitude of ways. In such a world, we understand and can experientially know that we are one with all things because we come from, and exist within, the same undifferentiated consciousness. It is a world in which we know that our lives and the lives of others, including non-humans, arise and flow from, and within, the same fundamental subjectivity. Although there is a propensity for beings to

[50] Wilber (2000) conceives of the human self as an 'archaeology of depth' involving spirit at the centre followed by soul, centaur, ego, persona, body, and then matter. With respect to panpsychism in general, I agree with Wilber when he denies particular types of interiors, such as feelings or souls, to fundamental units like atoms or quarks but instead affirms the presence of consciousness all the way down, the type of the subjectivity depending on the complexity of the development of the entity in question. All these types of rational discriminations do not, however, reveal the non-dual, post-rational level, the level beyond all words and concepts, in which spirit is revealed and the mind-body problem is resolved. See Wilber, K. (2000). *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy.* Boston: Shambhala, in particular pp. 276-282.

individuate, a necessary requirement for socialization at all levels of existence, there is simultaneously a movement by individuals toward the holistic ground of experience which can manifest outwardly as a empathy or a desire to reach out to communicate, express, and spread subjectivity through the field (Mathews, 2003).

Such a world is an alive world, a communicative world that seeks to actualize communion. In other words, it is a world that restores the sacred to the cosmos and brings us into harmony with the ways of nature. This is a world that has within its very being meaning and purpose and with these, values, intention, and finally, for we humans, justice and equality.[51] For, it is a world that recognizes that all things are enminded, spirited, and alive, and therefore precious and invaluable. In such a world consciousness itself demands the exercise of justice, fairness, and equality, for all things are grounded in the same source, and separation is seen to be illusory. Who 'in their right mind' would bring intentional suffering to themselves? Seeing that we are connected to all things we become balanced and centered. We both individuate, creating healthy centres of self at their own levels, but also realize that our interiority is fundamentally free of all personal attributes, but at the same time universally connected to everyone and everything else (Goff, 2019b). We find our home in the world.

Still, selves cannot change or transform in isolation; environmental conditions must be set up such that change can take place. If environmental conditions are fundamentally undemocratic and unjust then the individual self will suffer distress, not because of inherent pathology, but as a natural and normal response to conditions that are oppressive and alienating. If conditions are such that there exists fairness and justice, the self is then free and empowered to change accordingly. The dead and unconscious world of the materialists, reflected in the productive practices of modern-day capitalism, predispose persons toward mental distress. On the other hand, an alive and vital world, a world that speaks and communicates, that has purposes and goals, values and meanings, all of which are reflected in working conditions for people that are equitable and democratic, will nurture far more balanced mental health. We know that the inordinate emphasis on independence, isolation, competitiveness, and comparison fostered within individualistic, capitalistic societies are a certain recipe for the

[51] See Crethar & Winterowd (2012) for a summary of the perennial nature of certain values, virtues, and dispositions that must be acquired to practice counselling in a socially just manner.

appearance of mental health issues. Alternatively, strong social bonds, connections, and co-operation are widely recognized as factors that increase happiness and maintain satisfaction (Biglan, 2015).

Unfortunately, psychology has been not only an accomplice in the establishment of the autonomous individual self, separate from, and in competition with, similarly isolated others, but also in the growth of the neuroses and psychological problems that have arisen as a result of alienation within capitalist societies.

In contrast to the complicity of a psychology that individualizes the self in the service of materialistic political ideologies, panpsychism reconsiders the role of consciousness in our lives, not as the exclusive possession of human beings, but as the inner nature of all matter. This perspective invites a profound intimacy with the world, since at the level of consciousness we are one with it, and encourages more loving and just ways of relating with the world on all levels (Skrbina, 2007). It is a world-view that predisposes us toward an unalienated life.

4.10. Panpsychism as an Ally of Anti-capitalism

In what way, then, does this radical change in how we see the place of consciousness within the cosmos affect our lives in the world?

First, it might be useful to lay out what the panpsychist paradigm may mean in theoretical terms. Skrbina (2009) has proposed a holistic, relational, and dynamical view which challenges not only mind/body dualisms but also self/other dualisms, and which has clear ramifications for the way in which we see ourselves in the world, particularly the way we set up societies, and for the role of justice and equality within those societies. Just as the functioning of the brain is not limited to that one organ but is in relationship with, and dependent on, all the organs and processes within the body, so too

> each lower level of structure also has a corresponding mind-space. Each organ, each protein, each molecule has a mental aspect. Each feels. Each embodies memory and knowledge. Each experiences qualitative states, or qualia. Each carves out paths or trajectories in its own mind space, which in turn realize semantic representations or meaning. Each has a kind of unity of mind (though less complex and subtle than neural-like consciousness), reflected in its singular state space point. And each has a

> distinctive personality, in the overall network of states that it habitually occupies. (Skrbina, 2009, p. 376)

There are, then, multiple levels of mind from the lowest to the highest all corresponding to the various centres of physical processes found within the body. A total account of my body and mind includes all the systems and particles that both make me up or affect me which means everything must be taken into consideration at all levels to provide a full description of what I am, both body and mind (Skrbina, 2009).[52]

These processes and inter-relationships are co-extensive with the cosmos itself, and, again, just as these inter-relationships extend throughout the physical cosmos they also include simultaneously all levels of mind throughout the mental cosmos. Drawing on the work of quantum physicists, Skrbina postulates that since subatomic particles in the body do not exist in one spot but diffuse energetically into their surroundings, there is therefore a 'very small, but non-zero chance' that a given electron may be found half way across the galaxy. From this perspective what 'I am' at a quantum level is entangled with everything that is in the cosmos and consequently 'my mind' is the mind of the cosmos itself so that the world is both my body and mind (Skrbina, 2009).

These speculations are reminiscent of much of the world's mystical literature, what Aldous Huxley called the perennial philosophy. Hinduism's Net of Indra and the Buddhist *hua-yen* teachings of China (see Cleary, 1983, for a wonderful exposition of these teachings) are prime examples of this philosophical notion of inter- and intra-relationship. Consider, for example, Zen teacher Robert Aitken's exposition of the Chan master Chang-sha's comment that "the entire universe is your eye; the entire universe is your complete body; the entire universe is your own luminance. The entire universe is within your own luminance. In the entire universe there is no-one who is not your own self". Aitken (1996) comments that

> not only is there no one who is not myself or yourself, there is nothing at all that is not each of us. No leaf, no stone, no gecko that is not myself, you yourself. Thus the self arises - not merely interdependently with all things but as all things. It is all things - interbeing, to use Thich Nhat Hanh's expression. (p. 92)

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[52] See my previous description of the impact of our interactions with crows on our psyche. Non-human impacts on the shaping of our consciousness undoubtedly occur from a vast number of sources, perhaps from the totality of phenomena, as Skrbina suggests.

This, therefore, is a view of the world that fundamentally opposes the principal assumptions of capitalism.

Capitalism is a system which objectifies the world, including human beings, in order to commodify it for capital accumulation. This objectification depends upon an ideological project requiring individualism, separation, competition, and a strict material monism so that people and places are not appreciated as being holistically alive in the fullest sense, but are instead treated like robots, sources of labour power and objects for commodification, all of which enriches a particular class of persons to the impoverishment of the rest. Panpsychism offers a very different worldview because it recognizes consciousness in all things and so acknowledges the aliveness and vitality in things. But not only are all things joined by mind but, (if one adopts the form of panpsychism outlined above) all things are what they are because of everything else in the universe. This view is not dissimilar to the type of holism found in Ollman (1976) who argues that Marx thought in terms of internal relations, a Greek philosophy developed by both Spinoza and Hegel. Ollman believes that the way Marx used words and concepts reflect this understanding, which made some of his ideas difficult to comprehend. The idea that Marx advocated internal relations (Relations) is controversial because Marx did not overtly endorse the philosophy. Nevertheless, as Ollman (1976) points out, many of Marx's comments (for example, when he declares that man 'is nature' or that objects 'reside in the nature of his being') indicate not solely inter-connection with the external world but rather "some kind of union with his object; they are in fact relationally contained in one another, which requires that each be conceived of as a Relation" (pp. 27-28). Such understandings encourage an expansive and inclusive sense of self beyond the individual and separate body/mind, and since we naturally take care of ourselves if we are living sanely, a natural, inherent sense of meaning, equality, and justice within the universe itself is once again restored and available to be engaged with.

4.11. Chapter Summary

I have argued in this chapter that materialism and the current political ideologies based on it do not give a coherent account of the fundamental experience of consciousness. Centering consciousness as a legitimate datum of exploration positions it not only as a necessary alternative perspective on the nature of the physical world and reality, but also as a corrective to the rampant materialist values found within today's

society. I have further argued that a parsimonious theory of consciousness can be found in panpsychism, which asserts the presence of consciousness throughout the material universe. Such an understanding challenges the view that the world is a mere machine, pushed and pulled by mindless cause and effect, but rather that it is alive and full of meaning and purpose. Consciousness is not an additional property of matter in this dual-aspect conception of the reality of the world; it is instead what things are 'from the inside' as it were, their intrinsic nature as opposed to what they do in the world. I have proposed that while there are different experiences of consciousness both at the human and non-human levels, there exists a fundamental or universal consciousness that is present without qualification or limit within all things, as all things. Such an understanding sees the cosmos as relational, intimate, connected, entangled, and participatory. It also challenges our view of what we consider our 'self', enlarging it, both in mind and body, to contain multitudes, as the poet Walt Whitman wrote.

When the body and mind are seen to be inseparable from the world so that "the world and its animals and plants and people are found to be one's own body - then we walk with everybody and everything on a common path. This is compassion, suffering with others" (Aitken, 1996, p. 93). My intention in this chapter has been to show how a panpsychic perspective that underscores the ubiquity of consciousness as the intrinsic nature of things not only opposes the materialism that forms the basis for capitalist ideology, but that it inherently grounds an ethic of care, equality, and justice. Contrastingly, a materialism that either denies the actual reality of consciousness or which treats it as a mere epi-phenomenon of complex brains has invited a world-view based on a mechanistic determinism, where values are relative and socially constructed by the capitalist ruling classes. Accordingly, values are based not on the intrinsic worth of a thing but instead on what use that thing has for us. As I have argued in previous chapters, the psychologies originated along with the scientific revolution and the Industrial Revolution and its practices are deeply aligned with materialism and capitalist ideology. Consequently, helping professions like counselling psychology have been unable to dissociate themselves from the perpetuation of capitalist imperatives and thus have not been able to describe exactly why they need to address social justice within their practices. I have argued that the counselling profession must provide a critique of capitalist modes of production if it is truly to engage with social justice issues. At the same time, it must offer a theory of mind which accounts for the existence and functions

of consciousness and which can be the basis of new ways of engaging with the world. In light of the discussion so far, which has emphasized systemic challenges to the current order in the interests of eradicating alienation and its effects, as well as advocating for a new way of understanding consciousness as the ground for an ethic of social justice, the next chapter will attempt to provide a way in which helping professions like counselling psychology can extract themselves from the clutches of their capitalist progenitor to provide emancipatory practices for their clients.

“I like this place and could willingly waste my time in it.”

William Shakespeare

“How fortunate are you and I

whose home is timelessness.

We who have wandered down

from fragrant mountains of eternal now

to frolic in such mysteries

as birth and death

a day, or maybe even less…”

E. E. Cummings

Chapter 5: Toward an Emancipatory Practice

5.1. Chapter Introduction

My intention in this final chapter is to explore what a professional practice might look like if it were to engage with social justice issues at the broad systemic level, while recognizing the ubiquity and centrality of consciousness within the material world, especially as the ground for shared values such as democracy and equality. Since what we are looking for are concrete examples, I turn once again to the practice field that I am familiar with: counselling. Hence, I shall explore ways of practising counselling that could have wide applications to other human services fields, including teaching. I invite my reader to imagine, when reading the conversational vignettes between a therapist and a client at the conclusion of later sections of this chapter, similar conversations to be had in their own fields, such as in teaching contexts, between a teacher and a student, or in a workplace, between a manager and an employee.

I proceed, mindful of the systemic, social, and political forces that exist to diminish the importance of social justice work within helping professions. These forces seem especially resistant to critiques of capitalism and the introduction of alternative views on consciousness and its place in nature. I have argued so far that despite calls for systemic change as an essential area of engagement for the helping professions, particularly since it is here at the level of the socio-economic that mental health issues have been recognized to arise, there has been a paucity of attention given in the literature to an analysis of capitalism, class division, and the effects of alienation in the workplace. My wish is that this dissertation remedies this absence. I have proposed that it is alienation, especially as found in workplaces, along with the lifelong narratives and expectations constructed around our working lives, that are responsible for the plethora of mental health issues we see today, and with which counselling psychology and other helping professions must engage. The alienated condition is one that not only embodies the disintegration of real connection and relationship between people and nature, but also reflects the growing rise of inequality through class division. These inequalities themselves lead to mental health issues (Wilkinson et al., 2009). But alienation, as we have seen, also promotes a sense of disconnection from oneself, a separation from our true, authentic self as consciousness, resulting in artificial dualistic ruptures within all levels of the mind, in addition to those that occur between the mind and the body. These

divisions are perpetuated and maintained through a culture immersed in commodification and consumerism, as people live their lives working in employment that is unrewarding, or perceived as failing to contribute to society, or precarious and undependable. I have argued that although counselling psychology, as my main example, has rightfully embraced the importance of social justice within its mandate, it has really only made policy change and revision its aim, and has failed to problematize the systemic ground that fosters alienation and associated mental health concerns, that is, capitalism itself. Indeed, I have maintained that the counselling profession is not only historically tied to capitalism, but that it also fosters and supports the system through its practices, thus assisting to maintain the status quo.

In the previous chapter, I introduced a dual-aspect monistic panpsychism to account for the presence and experience of consciousness. An analysis of the place of consciousness within materiality effectively challenges, from the inside as it were, current materialist world-views that philosophically support a rapacious capitalism that depends on notions of atomization, separation, commodification, and de-spiritment of the world for the purposes of accumulating capital. The recognition of the proper place of consciousness within an account of our material existence in the world entails both an engagement with the new paradigm as a source of an ethic of equality and democracy, and with systemic socio-political change, especially if the helping professions are sincere in their determination to address social justice issues. On the one hand, our workplaces, and their supporting social systems like schools and colleges, are modelled after dualistic Cartesian materialist world-views which treat people and the environment as machines, commodities to be mined for profit. On the other hand, an alive and sentient world, as represented by a panpsychic dual-aspect monism, is one which demands an ethic of fairness, equality, and care, and invites the re-establishment of truly connected human and non-human relationships. E. O. Wright (2019) makes the point that, in order to oppose capitalism within society in general, there must be a critique of it as not only in opposition to people's material interests, an argument from class, but also as a system contrary to people's values and ethics. I concur with him, especially since the panpsychic view of the ubiquity of consciousness centers values and ethics within the presence of consciousness itself; thus, a denial of the primacy of consciousness is associative with the obscuration of values, and their replacement with social constructions based on the political ideology of the times.

The problem with restricting analysis to only class relations in the 21st century, from the outside as it were, is that many professionals, self-employed persons, and other 'white-collar' workers have mixed and sometimes complicated class positions, which obfuscates their perceived material interests. A middle manager, for example, can be viewed as a worker, and yet they work in the interests of the owners of the company. Their position is further obscured if the workers they manage are members of minority groups, or if they themselves belong to a minority group. The intersectionality of class, race, sex, or ability often serves to make it difficult for such managers to know where their best interests lie. Consequently, an appeal to values, which Wright (2019) equates with equality/fairness, democracy/freedom, and community/solidarity, is essential to, at the very least, identifying where one stands, opening the possibility of committing to social change, and to recruiting all persons to the cause of establishing more democratic systems. I argue that such values are grounded from the inside, in both the experiential existence of consciousness itself, that is, in subjectivity, and the contingent world-view that recognizes the Earth as conscious, alive, and full of meaning. The dual-aspect version of panpsychism presented here, particularly as it applies to helping practices, demands an engagement with both consciousness from the 'inside' and social transformation from the 'outside'.

5.2. Challenges to Counselling Psychology's Role as Emancipatory

I would like to first address some initial concerns regarding the efficacy of the counselling profession within a social justice framework, especially at the larger systemic level of analysis. If one accepts the premise that counselling psychology is grounded within capitalism historically, sharing its world-view of a mechanistic, materialist world populated by atomized and self-contained individuals, and that its practices, in fact, perpetuate the capitalist system, then it begs the question whether the profession can address social injustice through a critique of capitalism. Sometimes, even though counsellors appreciate the wider social determinants of their clients' complaints, they do not feel sufficiently equipped to deal with their issues on the wider level (McMahon, Arthur, & Collins, 2008). Perhaps it may be the case that counselling psychology's sphere of concern and practice can only go so far; it may indeed be effective and necessary in challenging discriminatory policies, for example, by opposing them on an organizational level, but it might not be capable of adequately resisting the very system that gave rise to such policies, apart from perhaps providing academic critiques. As a

practical matter, how is it possible for a counsellor to address systemic issues with a client within a 50 minute, standard counselling session, even when it is plain that the person's complaints are not individualized, disordered responses to life, as might be the view of the counselling hegemony, but natural and normal manifestations of alienated human nature within capitalist systems?

On the one hand, an argument might be made that it is important not to confuse liberation with therapy (Cohen, 1986).[53] Essentially, this view discards social justice as a concern within counselling practice. One obvious reason is that mental distress may be caused by many different and complex sources, some of which are unrelated to social conditions per se. Despite the fact that the manner in which childhood distress, for example, actually manifests is very likely shaped by social conditions, with neoliberal societies not being particularly conducive to healthy, supportive, and non-problematic resolutions of the issue, it could still be the case that individual counselling addressing childhood trauma (in this example) would nevertheless be warranted and effective.

Much like the premise of the 1999 movie "The Matrix," capitalism and neoliberalism have created an alternate world-reality that appears genuine to its inhabitants, but is not. In it the sense of being a unique and vital individual engaged in authentic connection with others and with the natural world is contorted to promote notions of individualism, competition, and ways of relating to others through commodity exchange. Thinking they are free and that they are living and working within a democratic system, people are in fact forced to sell their labour power to make money to survive. Capitalism transforms and distorts the relationships that formerly connected societies of people and, furthermore, creates the illusion that people are independent and free. Underneath the outward appearance, however, the social relations of capitalism function to merely give the semblance of independence. More importantly, and especially relevant to this discussion, these social relations themselves, shaped by alienation and commodification, become internalized as the essence of the individual (Cohen, 1986). As a consequence, particularly at a time where many mental health issues are related to anxieties and depressions associated with disconnected and

[53] He means this in the political sense, of course, and not the spiritual sense. I suggest counselling practices should be the wellspring of both spiritual and political change. David Loy, a Buddhist (2018) scholar, writing of the non-duality of personal and societal change, argues that personal transformation should not be separate from social transformation, and, indeed, inform each other in a genuine spiritual path.

alienated lives, counselling actually does work to relieve such distress, even at these decontextualized and individualized levels. Recalling the arguments in this dissertation, particularly in Chapter Three, I agree with Cohen that counselling is situated within a contradictory position since “[o]n the one hand therapy mystifies the underlying social relations. On the other hand it is appropriate to capitalist reality. At a certain level its language and belief system help the individual negotiate the capitalist world” (Cohen, 1986, p. 23). As a result, for a counsellor who holds an anti-capitalist orientation, theory and practice would tend to be divorced, with their interventions based solely on a pragmatism of ‘whatever works’. On this level, individualistic therapists and social justice therapists utilize the same models, the same practices, and the same explanations for the appearance and amelioration of mental distress (Cohen, 1986). The main difference between them is that the anti-capitalist social justice therapist, more aligned with contextual explanations philosophically, do not themselves believe the explanations for the theories of the practices they use.

On the other hand, despite the fact that therapy may work from individualist perspectives, I worry about the authenticity of the counsellor themselves under these conditions and whether these inconsistencies, pretenses, and disparities between theory and practice lead to a kind of cognitive dissonance, affecting not only the counsellor personally and professionally, but also their practices and relationships. A counsellor may legitimately question whether therapy, despite its successes within the capitalist Matrix, is really doing anything other than perpetuating the neoliberal agenda, and they may wonder if they are providing a genuine service. One alternative that may follow from this dilemma, of course, is a complete rejection of neoliberal discourse around psychological distress. This is the position of Marxist writers like Bruce Cohen (2016), a sociologist, whose main critique is directed towards psychiatry and its practices (i.e. in the short term, for example, he advocates for the abolition of the use of ECT, and withdrawing the ability of psychiatrists to prescribe medication) but who also believes “that all the allied professions associated with dictating and controlling our behaviour through the psychiatric discourse must also go” (p. 207).

Nevertheless, I would argue that, notwithstanding the veracity of much of the critique of the modern psychological enterprise, it is possible to construct theories and practices within this domain that are consistent with critiques of capitalism and neoliberalism, without throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Such approaches within

counselling would seek to erode capitalism from within, with the implementation of practices that look for the spaces and cracks within neoliberal society from which democratic ways may be seeded and grown (Wright, 2019). Using the analogy of an ecosystem to consider the multiple domains in which change could occur to transform capitalist society, Wright (2019) suggests that

> the strategic vision of eroding capitalism imagines introducing the most vigorous varieties of emancipatory species of noncapitalist economic activity into the ecosystem of capitalism, nurturing their development by protecting their niches and figuring out ways of expanding their habitats. The ultimate hope is that eventually these alien species can spill out of their narrow niches and transform the character of the ecosystem as a whole. (Chapter 3, Eroding Capitalism, para. 3)

The helping professions as a whole are, I propose, ideally situated to contribute to such an endeavour. Of course, they do not do this through emancipatory economic activity, but through emancipatory identity and relationship transformational practices. This is not a novel idea. As we have seen, the notion that therapy, for example, could liberate people from within capitalist societies was advocated by Marxist humanists like Erich Fromm who believed that it could potentially free the individual from the strictures of the neoliberal imperative and reconcile the person to their true nature (Cohen, 1986). Although this is accomplished with some difficulty, I would argue that a new vision of the role of consciousness within materiality, particularly conceptions that are panpsychic in nature, and the ethical and democratic imperatives inherent within this view, opens up the possibilities for alternative theoretical perspectives on helping practices, and their emancipatory place in our society.

5.3. Engaging with the Macro-levels through the Micro

As Goodman et al. (2004) point out in their comprehensive survey of how to implement social justice issues into both counselling theory and practice, the dilemma for anti-capitalist counsellors is translating theoretical understandings to a practical level, and how to bring a systemic critique into the every-day practices of the therapist. It is all very well to ascertain that “the individual struggles experienced by so many people actually are rooted in oppressive social, political, and cultural forces and that these struggles cannot be resolved without changing the systems and structures from which they arise” (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 798), but how does this play out in the day-to-day work of a counsellor?

As a preface to what follows, I would like to like to emphasize the following proposals, which have been elucidated in previous chapters, and which provide a necessary reference frame for the rest of the discussion.

First, therapy sessions can be seen to be themselves the cracks within which new ways of seeing the world can begin to take root and spread into individuals' lives, and into their multiple relationships. As mentioned, this need not merely be restricted to the proliferation of 'non-capitalist economic activity' as a counter measure to systemic injustice as Wright (2019) proposes; other types of activity, too, may be recruited for the purpose of upending injustice. The helping encounter itself, grounded in an authentic relationship and assisted by appropriate practices, can change perspectives and nurture the growth of the luscious new environments of a truly democratic world.

Second, I have argued that it is consciousness itself that is the intrinsic nature of all things, and that in human beings alienation from this reality, especially cultivated through workplace arrangements, constitutes the beginning of a creeping commodification and alienation at all levels of the human psyche, in addition to the alienation in multiple kinds of relationships due to oppressive work conditions. Capitalist social relations, which, as we have seen, are alienated ways of being by definition, usurp the central space of identity properly belonging to consciousness, resulting in the plethora of mental health issues we see today. Consequently, a therapy that repositions consciousness as the center and ground of the individual is required if the therapy is to be truly emancipatory.

Finally, I have outlined the case for the intra- and inter-sectionality of the world both at a physical level and also at the level of mind, that all of matter is enminded, and that not only is the part found within the whole but also that the whole is found within the part. This idea aligns not only with Ollman's concept of 'internal relations' within the Marxian tradition, but also with panpsychist philosophers of mind, and with the perennial traditions of the mystical branches of both the East and West. In practical terms this means that the micro-, mesa-, and macro- distinctions of Goodman et al.'s (2004) analysis of the desired domains of counselling's engagement with social justice issues are mutually inter-dependent and, most importantly, intra-dependent so that the micro-levels of analysis can be found within the macro-levels, and, most crucially for this inquiry, the macro-level is found within the micro-levels. In practical terms what might be

ostensibly considered individual therapy can not only influence the broader systemic realms in Wright's sense of introducing oppositional emancipatory perspectives, but that its very practices themselves can contain the seeds of freedom from the systemic injustice that we strive for.

5.4. The Helping Relationship

I would like to begin the following discussion with a general account of why the helping relationship (I prefer this term to 'therapeutic', and it is equally applicable to many of the helping professions) intrinsically has a liberatory effect within counselling. As I have described in a number of places within this dissertation, alienation manifests as a distortion of relationships within the economic, environmental, social, political, and personal spheres. By definition, alienation removes us from real connection and intimacy with the other, estranging us into separate and individual parts, and turning us, at all levels of our being, into commodities to be mined for surplus value. The effect is both intentional and unintentional on the part of the capitalist classes. On the one hand, alienation serves to further the notion that we are separate and isolated beings, whose role is as competitors and consumers in a world of constructed and mostly trivial needs. On the other hand, alienation can be thought of as an 'externality', an unwanted but necessary side-effect of the business of capitalism, and although economically and socially costly, it is, nevertheless, a requirement if business is to continue to profit those in power. Alienation fosters commodity fetishism, an unnatural and manufactured replacement for real relationships between people and their world, which creates the empty self, a kind of internalization within the individual of the dynamics and practices of capitalism, a false self-narrative of perpetual unworthiness that hides their intrinsic true self.

Contrary to common belief in the importance and efficacy of certain helping techniques and models over others to initiate client change, Miller, Duncan, & Hubble (1997), in an overview of the evidence on therapy's effectiveness, report that 40% of therapy's success comes from factors occurring in the person's life outside of the therapy room. This means that life itself, with its changing circumstances, conspire to improve the perception people have of their situation for the better. Interestingly, the quality of the relationship accounts for 30% of therapy's effectiveness, with only 15% assigned to technique, and 15% to hope, placebo, and expectation. Thus, technique or

models do not predominantly matter for client change. It is really relationship and connection that make a difference in a person's life. Although this should be unsurprising, since it is well documented, for example, that the quality of relational attachments during a child's early years has profound impacts on the quality of their later relationships (Karen, 1994), and, furthermore, that the relationship with a helper may assist in uncovering and repairing ruptures to these early relationships, the psychology profession (and the industries that are spawned from it) continues to promote the idea that it is techniques and models that matter, often to the disregard of strong relational bonds. However, this technocratic approach to counselling not only is consistent with the capitalist agenda of the commodification of the mechanized psyche but it also assists in obscuring the importance of genuine relationship as a remedy to the impoverished isolationism of neoliberal ideology

When people experience a lack of real relationship in their lives, perhaps showing up as anxiety, fear, guilt, sorrow, lack of purpose, and so on, they often look to the helping professions for assistance. It is the helping relationship itself, the authentic connection between the helper and the person, that opens up the possibility for the realization of what real, vulnerable relationships would look like in their lives. An effective counselling session, for example, becomes a conduit for empathy, deep listening, verbal and non-verbal connection, interest, encouragement, validation, and support. This encounter seeks to know the person in their depths, just as they are, with all their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, without ulterior designs, judgement, or motives. The relationship is genuine because there is no contrivance to commodify it, or to use it as a means to another end. A good helping relationship is, by definition, unalienated since it both seeks a way of being with another that decenters the interiorized narratives of neoliberal ideology, revealing the person's true self, the center from which they can move in the world in a more emancipated manner, and which also highlights ways in which the client has already found opportunities to resist oppressive stories. Within the counselling relationship, the person discovers that part of themselves that exists deeper than the narratives of separation, individuality, competition, and constructed needs. Unhelpful stories of the self, based on habitual retelling from the past and projected into the future, can be seen from the bright reality of the present moment where real connection with themselves and others may be explored, leading to a sudden or gradual release of false and confining self-constructions. The relationship between helper and

person is, therefore, itself an emancipatory act, a way of inserting noncapitalist relational activity and ways of being directly into the lives of persons and whose effects extend to all areas of their lives, including the macro-levels of the political and ideological.

5.5. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

While recognizing the importance of the helping relationship by its very nature to embody the essence of a non-commodified, non-competitive, genuine, and authentic relationship, especially as it might form the basis for its infusion into other areas of life, it is nevertheless also necessary that the conversations with clients move toward meeting their needs. This often involves challenging conditioned, habitual self-narratives, loosening their effects, and providing different perspectives that might possibly elicit change and growth. In light of my second consideration mentioned above, this may comprise introducing deeper aspects of the self, aspects that exist beyond the narrow confines of capitalist expressions of self. I have argued that this aspect of the self is consciousness, which lies as the intrinsic nature of the client, and of all things. Connection with this aspect of the self unites people with their own freedom, including their freedom from functioning as a lifelong producer and consumer of products within capitalist society. Any therapy that is to be emancipatory must not only be capable of connecting the client to this central aspect of their identity directly, but must work within processes that point back to it from various directions. Based on the third consideration noted above, a therapy working with such processes is effective not only at the micro-level involving the individual's psyche, but also, at the same time, at the macro-level involving the person's perception of their engagement with roles within capitalist society.

As I described in the introduction to this dissertation, I changed careers from a corporate job to counselling therapist work late in life. There were the usual challenges of time allotment and finances, but there were also nagging doubts about the switch itself. Was I too old? Why not stay with what I knew, where it was safe and certain? Would I be any good as a counsellor, and what if I wasn't? What then? And so on. When the idea first occurred to me to investigate the possibilities of changing careers, I began to read everything I could on counselling and the models used to practice. One of the first books I read was *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life* by Steven Hayes (2005). This book was a popular presentation of a therapy approach he had co-originated called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT. Not only did the fortuitous discovery of

this book provide me with a model that I use to this day with my own clients, but the approach assisted me to move forward to pursue my studies and to finally change careers completely. I will use ACT as an example of a therapy approach that can provide a means to changing at both the individual and systemic levels, not because it is the only one, but because it is the approach with which I have the most familiarity. Furthermore, although the ACT model is flexible and is now used by a broad range of helping professions, my elucidation of the ACT processes in terms of systemic change possibilities are entirely my own.

> Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT, may be briefly defined as: an approach to psychological intervention defined in terms of certain theoretical processes, not a specific technology. In theoretical and process terms we can define ACT as a psychological intervention based on modern behavioral psychology, including Relational Frame Theory, that applies mindfulness and acceptance processes, and commitment and behavior change processes, to the creation of psychological flexibility. (ACBS Website)

There are six key processes in ACT that, when working well in a person's experience, form the basis of psychological flexibility. They are self-as-context, cognitive defusion, being present, acceptance, committed action, and values (Hayes et al., 1999). Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to give a full explication of ACT, I would like to explore these processes principally in relation to two of the three of Goodman et al.'s (2004) main areas of focus in counselling work, that is, the individual and family level, or the micro, and the systemic level, or macro. It has been the argument of this dissertation that it is within the level of the macro, the capitalist system and its neoliberal ideologies, that real change must take place for an appreciable impact on mental health concerns, but that most individual counselling at the micro-level is not up to the task of nurturing such change due to its complicity with the system itself. However, I have also argued that consciousness, the source of meaning, value, justice, connection and identity, has been missing from our materialist world-view, the same world-view that gave us individual psychotherapies. Returning the experience and understanding of consciousness to its place as the intrinsic nature of things, including human beings, significantly undermines the capitalist relation with therapy and opens up the possibilities of a truly emancipatory individual therapy based on a foundation of an ethic of justice and democracy. Thus, I believe that individual therapy does have a place in effecting change at both the individual and the systemic levels. Keeping in mind the

previously mentioned outcomes of my explorations so far - that consciousness is ubiquitous throughout all things; that individual therapy may offer a means to eroding the neoliberal paradigm from within, carving its own pathways through the capitalist agenda and providing new ways of being in the world; and that the totality of things, in mind and matter, are wholly present in each individual thing - I propose that approaches like ACT can furnish ways to accomplish this goal. I explore these ideas while taking into consideration Goodman et al.'s (2004) six principles of a) on-going self-examination, b) sharing power, c) giving voice, d) facilitating consciousness raising, e) building on strengths, and f) leaving clients with the tools for social change, as a guiding framework for social justice practices at all levels. In the following discussion I will use these principles randomly to highlight the discussion.

I begin by providing some explanations of each of the six ACT processes. They are described as processes because they are fluid and flexible, each one connected to the others, but also, importantly, each one found within the others. This is a reflection of the fluidity and changing nature of life itself and a demonstration of how phenomena are intra-connected, as I have argued. They are not techniques, although sometimes techniques are used to illustrate and practice them. I have taken some liberties in my explication of each of the processes, especially the key one for my purposes, self-as-context, in order to illustrate my contention that micro-level interactions have macro-level effects. Thus, contrary to Relational Frame Theory's understanding of self-as-context, for example, as a verbal relational frame of I-Here-Now as opposed to You-There-Then, emphasizing a solely linguistic basis for perspective-taking, I consider self-as-context to be an actual ontological category, and I explain the process in these terms. Either way, whether one considers this aspect of the self as a mere verbal frame formed through the acquisition of language, reinforced through operant conditioning, or whether one proposes an actually existent sense of self, the manifestation in practice of the process is the same.

I have also illustrated each process with a short vignette of a counselling interaction, aimed to provide a sense of it; again, it should be borne in mind that this is somewhat artificial since there can be considerable movement between each process as a session proceeds.

5.5.1. Self-as-Context

Self-as-context is undoubtedly the most difficult process to understand for both a counsellor and a client and yet it is the one that has the most relevance to this discussion. For many people the notion of self-as-context seems familiar as it has comparisons to their spiritual practices. In Buddhism, for example, it is known as *anatta*, the no-self, a term with many interpretations depending upon tradition, but which points to a sense of self beyond our usual conceptual and storied understandings of ourselves. In contrast to our familiar socially-constructed narratives and descriptions of who or what we are in the world, which can generally be described as self-as-content, self-as-context indicates the 'I' that holds or contains these stories and self-depictions. It is experiencing itself, the subject, the sense 'here I am' (Hayes, 2005). This has also been called the 'observing self' (Deikman, 1982), or the 'witness-consciousness' (Albahari, 2009), and is another name for awareness or simply, as I have used the term in this dissertation, consciousness itself. This essential and central consciousness is qualitative, in that it it is only accessible from a first-person subjectivity, and thus is not observable through the quantitative methods of a third-person science. Self-as-context, or consciousness, is a way of being rather than having, a vital distinction for a liberatory praxis since 'having' is essential to capitalist production and accumulation, but 'being' is beyond all appropriation and commodification.

Deikman (1982) clarifies the necessary distinctions to be made by asserting that

> at the heart of psychopathology lies a fundamental confusion between the self as object and the self of pure subjectivity. Emotions, thoughts, impulses, images, and sensations are the contents of consciousness: we witness them; we are aware of their existence. Likewise, the body, the self-image, and the self-concept are all constructs that we observe. But our core sense of personal existence - the "I" - is located in awareness itself, not in its content. (p. 10)

Hence, the observing self is pure subjectivity and, consequently, cannot be described as possessing any particular attributes. Nevertheless, it is experienced as spacious, timeless, ever-present, and, because it is not an object, it is not a thing. No-thing. As mentioned before in previous chapters of this dissertation, this is the true empty (*sunyata* for Buddhists) self which is the intrinsic nature of all matter, and for people in our capitalist society it is that which is obscured by the adopted empty self of neoliberal ideology (Rose, 1996). The neoliberal empty self is almost like a shadow form of the

intrinsic observing self of consciousness. Superficially, it goals and intentions seem attractive enough: it seeks love, peace, connection, justice, and creativity, for example, but it does so through the consumption of commodities because it has adopted and is enacting the social relations in which it is embedded. As we noted in Chapter One, the commodified relationships found in capitalism are fundamentally distorted, however, and cannot ultimately satisfy the person. The Buddhists call this condition *dukkha,* or unsatisfactoriness, which manifests as personal and social unhappiness. In contrast, the observing self of consciousness naturally manifests the values and qualities so desired by the commodity-obsessed empty self. So, for example, since consciousness is itself empty of objects, a pure subjectivity, it is experienced as a spacious openness, welcoming of everyone and everything, and thus is love itself. As it is that within which phenomenal objects of all sorts arise and depart, consciousness-as-subject itself remains completely still, and is experienced as peace. Finally, since it is a pure subjectivity inherent within all things, with no objective thing to separate it from 'others', it is the ground of equality itself. Of course, how these values and qualities manifest within a society remains to be explored, but the intimate experience of being grounded in the true empty self is essential and, happily, always available.

Specifically, within helping environments people often present with narrow and inflexible narratives of themselves, others, and their relationships, which tend to become descriptions of who they are at their core. These stories are often personally unsatisfactory and causal of difficulties in their lives. They tend to be constricted and limited accounts of themselves and their situation which undermine or obscure possible new directions. As discussed, these narratives are the internalized relations of the capitalist society in which people are living, stories that become the essence of the person (Cohen, 1986). As such, they are assumed aspects of the self that can be objectified and commodified by the socio-cultural ideology. Self-as-context is a conceptualization of the self which evacuates such narratives, uncovering the actual intrinsic nature of people as consciousness itself. From a helping perspective, this is the sense of self that assists clients to connect with something that is unchanging and existentially safe, and from which they can non-judgmentally observe all passing contents of consciousness, including their old stories of who they are (Hayes et al., 1999). As Deikman indicates, contact with the self-as-context helps people to differentiate who they really are at center from their passing peripheral thoughts,

feelings, emotions, and memories. Touching this sense of self is both enlarging and empowering. Above all, it is simultaneously liberating at the personal and systemic levels since this aspect of self is pure subjectivity and, therefore, cannot be commodified and mined for surplus value as objects can.

In order to access this aspect of themselves in a session, I oftentimes use metaphors, which are extremely useful for by-passing the rational mind, so valued in contemporary discourses, but which can sometimes become an impediment in therapy. For example, if a person plays, or knows how to play, chess, I may ask them to imagine a chess board with all the pieces on full display (Hayes et al., 1999). Each piece represents thoughts and feelings, or stories about who the person is. The conversations may take different directions but usually after identifying the pieces as the circumstances of the person's life, and, most importantly, who they are, the person is asked if there is another part of the chess-board that might represent another, different aspect of self. The answer, of course, is that they are the board itself, which, despite the struggles and narratives raging on top of it, is quite indifferent, safe, and secure. The board holds all the pieces but is unaffected by their movements. I also point out that despite a shift in identity from the pieces on the board to the board itself, the pieces do not necessarily disappear; they may indeed remain but with the switch in identity their influence over the person is reduced.

When people move from their storied self-as-content identities to a broader, capacious self-as-context identity they perform a radical act of defiance. They usurp the neoliberal internalized self and replace it (actually, it was always there unacknowledged, a primordial source of alienation) with consciousness itself, a pure subjectivity. Here, then, is a crack in the fortress of the oppressive capitalist domain that can be nurtured and encouraged within a counselling session. For it is a small step to subsequently realize that everyone's essence is the same and that we are one in inter-subjectivity, each deserving of equality, justice, and care. Finally, this experiential understanding may further open up the realization that all things have consciousness as their intrinsic nature. This might take the form, when the opportunity presents itself, of having conversations, perhaps initiated through the person's spirituality (Hayes, 1984; Westgate, 1996), around the sense of self that exists beyond the rational and emotional mind ordinarily conceived, and which is, in fact, present everywhere. Many mindfulness based therapists, rooting their approaches within Eastern meditative traditions, have

pioneered this kind of approach (Deikman, 1983; Welwood, 2002; Wilber, 1979; Wilber, 2000).

ACT integrates this broader sense of ourselves into conversations in order to enlarge people's perspectives on their lives and to gently challenge narratives they may hold which are self-defeating and constraining to their valued life directions. In a sense, conversations around self-as-context reflect the principle of consciousness-raising in its truest form. Specifically, when consideration is given to consciousness-raising people may, at the micro-level of the individual self, experience that part of themselves that is free (as context) of the designation of potentially limiting and oppressive descriptions (the content) like worker, consumer, order-taker, not-good-enough, not-worthy-enough, controlled, beggared, or deprived, for example. Consciousness-raising would involve both realizing this liberating aspect of themselves and assisting them to abide within its more centered and grounded presence, while, at the same time, opening up conversations around possibilities for resistance, speaking out, organization, refusal, dissent, and non-conformity in the workplace. Drawing on the work of Paul Freire, Goodman et al. (2004) articulate the power of consciousness-raising as a means to achieve an awareness of people's socioeconomic position and their cultural contexts, normalize distressed thoughts and feelings as understandable responses to neoliberal inequities, and open prospects to challenge and change those realities through conversations that highlight systemic oppression caused by ideologies, social institutions, and societal expectations and norms.

The following vignette demonstrates how an experience of self-as-context might be introduced within a counselling session. It is not intended to show the full scope of these kinds of conversations, which often involve moving to other processes, and circling back later on in session or further sessions once progress is made, but it nevertheless captures the possibilities of this kind of approach.

Client: I feel like I've taken on too much. My wife always says we should just have had one kid...now we have three. There's just more responsibility with more kids. And I have to work more, harder too…I'd like to just leave, take off, and forget about everything. I mean I wouldn't but I think about it.

Counsellor: Do you remember the other day we were talking about the chess-board, how it contains all the different pieces, holding them all, but itself not affected one way or another by the battle going on on top of it?

Client: Yeah, I was thinking afterwards how that would apply to me. I mean I do seem to be juggling a lot all at one...I'm a husband, I'm a dad, I'm an employee, though apparently not a very productive one according to my boss, and on top of all that my mom's not been doing too well.

Counsellor: That's interesting. You say 'I am a father, son, husband, employee'...I'm sure you can think of other parts you play. Every role seems different relatively speaking, but I wonder about the thread that runs through all the identities you've taken on?

Client: What thread is that?

Counsellor: Here, let's write them out [client writes each out on a sheet of paper]: 'I am a man', 'I am a husband', 'I am an employee', 'I am a father', 'I am a son'. You could add a whole string of others: 'I am 43 years old', 'I am Caucasian', and so on.

Client: Oh, I see now...the common thread is 'I am'.

Counsellor: Exactly, all these roles you play, the identities you have, the descriptions you might have of yourself...all of them come and go, but you are always there. What's that phrase 'Everywhere you go there you are?' Anyway, the 'I am' is always there...it was there when you were 2 years old and it will be there when you're 82. All these other identities you have had changed, and will change, in time, but the sense of 'I am' remains throughout.

Client: I see that but what difference does it make? I mean how is it going to

get me out from all this mess I've got myself into?

Counsellor: I can't really speak for you but its a good place from which to decide what you want to do. Would you rather live out of a space that is constant, grounded, and centered or from one of the limited, temporary identities you have, some of which are causing you some real trouble?

Client: Yeah, I see what you mean...that's the board that holds all the pieces together.

Counsellor: Yes. Perhaps we can explore some ways to stay with *this* self.

5.5.2. Cognitive Defusion

Cognitive defusion is the process by which people are able to see thoughts as thoughts, feelings as feelings, memories as memories, and so on, without reacting to them or giving them undue power in their lives that could lead to distress. It involves the ability to respond to thoughts in a non-habitual and non-judgmental manner, and to choose to act on thoughts only if they align with the person's chosen values (Blackledge, 2015; Hayes et al., 1999). Defusion from thoughts means in practice that the person can look at thoughts and not from them. As with all the ACT processes, defusion is very much related to self-as-context, and it may be worked on simultaneously. The importance of just noticing thoughts is vital. There is no need to change thoughts, swapping so-called negative thoughts for positive ones. The person is merely asked to watch thoughts come and go, compassionately and non-critically. This approach can be contrasted to other approaches (for example, cognitive behavioural therapy) which label specific thoughts as unwelcome and whose aim it is to get rid of them. When certain thoughts and feelings are labeled 'negative' or 'undesirable', it inevitably leads to subjecting thoughts to surveillance for ideological purposes. For example, we discover that cognitive therapy encourages a person to understand that "our perception of an event or experience powerfully affects our emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses to it" so that the client learns "to test the meaning and usefulness of various thoughts [they] have during the day and to change the thinking patterns that keep [them] locked into dysfunctional moods, behaviors, or relationship interactions" (Greenberger & Padesky, 1995, p. 2). There is no weight given here to social context or to the simple

fact that perhaps anger or sadness or anxiety are normal human responses to environmental conditions that are oppressive.[54] Furthermore, such conceptualizations of persons (made plain in the name of the therapy and the title of this particular book, *Mind Over Mood*) privileges the rational over the emotional for good reason. Emotions exist on a level that is beyond the rational, individualistic sphere. Neoliberal philosophy, consequently, cannot allow the emotions to get out of control. As Holmes (2004) notes with respect to anger:

> Anger matters politically because it both motivates and continues to fuel activity and conflict. Analysis of anger can also assist in the exploration of the supposed personalization of politics. Does anger inevitably contribute to nationalism, racism, self-centred individualism and division, or does it challenge injustice, resist the bureaucratization of politics and allow greater celebration of diversity? (p. 123)

If anger is considered as a response to oppression and injustice (Watts, 2004), it is no wonder that it is to be tamed via the disciplinary power of psychology.

When exploring feelings of alienation, defusion may be viewed as a way in which clients can at last gain some distance from their constructed and confining identities and allow them to 'give voice' to their class position. In relation to class, I suggest that giving voice invites a deep curiosity into the working life of the client, their stories and experiences of work, their history of work, their goals, expectations, and possibilities from being employed, the nature of relationships made at work, the meaning they make of their work life and careers, and an inquiry into their understanding of their place in society as a result of their work. Explorations of these and other questions will not necessarily change the person's status or attitude toward their employment, but it will assist to illuminate an activity performed for a vast majority of the day, and which shapes, or at least strongly influences, the person's life outside of work. Within my counselling practice I often hear from men who have thrown themselves into working life with the idea that their work is the extent of their role and obligation in their lives. Meanwhile, their interests disappear, they no longer connect with friends, community, or family, and their partners are unhappy with their relationship. I once saw a couple for counselling who were about to separate for good. They had two children, each from previous relationships. This couple had lost touch with each other to the extent that they

[54] See Hagan & Donnison (1999) for a discussion of how individually focused psychotherapies like cognitive behavioural therapy might engage with social contexts.

could not talk about anything without fighting. It became apparent that the man had an extremely narrow view of his role in the relationship. He saw himself as a ‘man’s man’: he had been raised to work hard and to support his family at all costs. He thought that any other role was either secondary or not worthy of his attention. In ACT parlance, he was ‘fused’ with a literal description of who he was and what role he should play, and there was for him no other options. However, as their lives changed (i.e. his wife started her own business, which he, incidentally, disapproved of) his fusion with the narrative of himself as worker/provider increasingly began to limit the possibilities of changing with the new circumstances. Individual counselling with him involved using mindful defusion strategies (for example, the Leaves on a Stream exercise encourages clients to visualize sitting by a stream and placing every thought and feeling that comes up on a leave which floats by, without grasping or pushing away the thought) to try to create a little space between himself and his conceptualized self. Along with conversations around work and its place in his life, these defusion exercises were helpful for at least giving some broader social and historical context to very personal and distressing difficulties, and to offering an experiential sense of not being limited to narrow story lines.

Working life, and general expectations around roles within society, can be especially appropriate to consider under current circumstances in the West where wages are stagnant but there is a perpetual expectation to consume more to ‘get ahead’ in life. Social demands foster a pervasive insecurity, not just economically but also personally, as persons are, despite working hard, bombarded by cultural messages to feel ‘not good enough’ in multiple ways. Advertising is especially pernicious in this regard with daily reminders that our appearance is not good enough, or that we are not smart enough, or that our cars, houses, furniture, vacations, or gadgets do not measure up. For many people the solution is to work harder, longer hours, or perhaps obtain second jobs to support themselves and their families, in order to keep up with everyone else (who are, of course, doing the same thing).

However, it can be especially difficult for people whose work, supposedly the solution to the cultural messages of insufficiency, itself generates feelings of deep despair and distress. For example, workers involved in precarious employment, becoming part of the ‘precariat’, are those who partake in unstable, insecure labour, usually involving casual labour, temping, on-call labour, platform cloud labour and others. Perhaps even worse than that experienced by those employed in steady five day

a week jobs, this kind of employment leaves persons with no sense of connection, community, or creativity. They are obliged to spend many unpaid hours working to find paid work, a reality that is obscured by the politicians and economists, and ultimately the employment that is eventually secured is “below their education or qualifications, and have low mobility upwards. All this creates frustration, insecurity and stress” (Standing, 2018, Chapter 16, para. 17). Such work promotes exclusion from community, loneliness, depression, anxiety, and anger.

Yet, as discussed, alienation does not only show up for the precariat. A large portion of those in so-called stable employment feel that their employment contributes nothing to the world. The sociologist David Graeber (2018), citing a YouGov poll, points out that 37% of people did not think their job made any contribution, whereas 50% thought that it did, with 13% being unsure. He asks as a result:

> Could there be anything more demoralizing than having to wake up in the morning five out of seven days of one’s adult life to perform a task that one secretly believed did not need to be performed - that was simply a waste of time or resources, or that even made the world worse? Would this not be a terrible psychic wound running across our society? Yet if so, it was one that no one ever seemed to talk about. (Preface, para. 3)

If Graeber is correct in his assessment of the situation, and I think he is, it truly is a tragic state of affairs with deep moral and spiritual consequences. Thus, challenging societal narratives within the counselling session can perhaps open up possibilities for new ways of working in the life of the person.

The following is an example of how cognitive defusion might be utilized within a counselling session. The counsellor had previously given the person the Leaves On the Stream exercise to try (as described above) and he uses it to encourage the person to separate from some unhelpful self-stories, and to open up some space to connect with what matters to him:

Client: My father always said I wouldn’t amount to much though. He thought I was lazy. I guess I’ve just tried to prove him wrong over the years. It feels like I’ve been living for him more than for me.

Counsellor: And so what do you tell yourself about all that?

Client: I tell myself that I’m a loser and if I don’t keep making money I’ll be

out in the streets.

Counsellor: So your mind really is giving you a hard time. I wonder if you could put those thoughts on the leaves too?

Client: OK. Still, I can't stop thinking about it, especially when I leave here.

Counsellor: Where do all these stories about what you should be come from… your dad ?

Client: Yes, for sure. He always said you've got to work hard to get anywhere in life.

Counsellor: And that's what you've done...

Client: Yes, but I always beat myself up for not getting things right, and not really getting what I want. My dad always preferred my brother Joe and now he's really successful. I'm a total failure at what I do in comparison with Joe.

Counsellor: There's another thought that you can put on a leaf. We talked about your values before, about what really matters to you in your life. Does what you're telling yourself line up with what's important to you really, or not?

Client: Not really. I mean, I feel like I'd like to get into forestry…I know I'd be good at that, and it's something I've always wanted to do.

Counsellor: So, what steps could you take to make that happen for yourself?

5.5.3. Contact with the Present Moment

This process involves assisting people to return their attention to the present moment, to the now. Recognizing that life happens only in the present moment, persons are encouraged to bring their awareness to whatever is happening to them, or within them, on a moment-to-moment basis (Hayes et al., 1999; Luoma, Hayes, & Walser, 2007). This process is useful for those who find their minds spiralling off into thoughts of the past or the future, who struggle with worry, or who find themselves to be overly

analytical. It is also useful for bringing attention to aspects of experience that have been avoided, which is theorized by ACT researchers to contribute to the development of mental health issues. This may be particularly applicable to people's workplace situations. As mentioned previously, a vast portion of the working population feel utterly disengaged with something they do for eight hours in a day, and yet no one talks about it (Graeber, 2018). Present moment awareness assists in developing fluid and flexible self-knowledge, by bringing painful thoughts and feelings into awareness (Hayes et al., 1999). Avoidance of these aspects of our lives has significant costs for living life in an authentic and fulfilling manner. Bringing attention to the present moment encourages people to get in touch with feelings of alienation due to workplace arrangements, and to share them with others. It is by connecting to what is happening in the now-moment through an open non-judgemental awareness of current mind/body experience that individuals and communities can together re-establish an unalienated sensuous life.

Awareness in the moment is not only beneficial for clients but also for counsellors. Attention to the present moment is invaluable to learning about ourselves and facilitating on-going self-examination. Goodman et al. (2004) rightly point out that ongoing self-examination is necessary in order to identify values, biases, stereotypical attitudes, racism, sexism, ageism, and other proclivities which may influence, impede, or obscure the counselling process. Since we all carry culturally imbued values and assumptions, these need to be clarified, reflected on, and assessed, and decidedly not hidden away or, even worse, denied (Odegard & Vereen, 2010). Additionally, we need to attend to power and the movement of power within relationships, and make it visible and named. It is imperative that a counsellor scrutinize their 'positionality', meaning their relative power in connection with race, ethnicity, culture, and gender (Goodman et al., 2004). To this, however, I would also add class. Class relations come through in perhaps unexpected but subtle ways within the counselling interaction. Psychological models and therapeutic interactions are themselves political, and therefore express a particular ideology. Despite a general belief, common to both the general public and therapists themselves, that because interventions are supported by some research evidence and are thus empirically verified, they are, therefore, entirely objective and value neutral. On the contrary, the 'psychologization' of contemporary society makes counselling psychology, and other such practices, a perfect means to maintaining the capitalist status quo. Counselling interactions are designed to replicate the class arrangements

found within society (Roberts, 2015). Therapeutic practices that locate mental distress within persons, encouraging them, through the provision of techniques, to diligently 'work on themselves' to eradicate their distress, all in the exchange for a fee which goes to the counsellor, mirrors the power relations set up by the division of labour in the workplace. Thus, self-reflection in connection with class involves not only considering one's own class position but, more importantly to counselling practice, how class is reproduced within the helping setting. Conventional counselling may assist in solidifying class division within sessions, while at the same time obscuring this practice under a veneer of scientific objectivity. That the counsellor and the client belong to the same class - the working class - is unimportant; it is the reification of the isolated self and its expeditious return to producing and consuming within the capitalist system that is the main goal of most counselling practices. Consequently, awareness in the present moment of class issues can help to open up conversations around this topic and facilitate a less oppressive approach to therapy.

The following brief vignette demonstrates helping a client connect with supressed feelings by bringing attention directly to their experience of them in the here and now. Also, the counsellor is shown to take a chance by voicing their in the moment impressions of what is being said by the client, inferred by non-verbal cues. This is instructive for the person because it demonstrates the ability to not be seduced by narratives, which often lead to unhelpful past/future thinking, only serving a superficial social politeness, and to return to the authenticity of the present moment. It also shows that the counsellor is engaged with the same process together with the person.

Client: I mean it's not so bad. Actually, it's pretty good At least we get to work inside. And the pay's good.

Counsellor: You don't seem too certain.

Client: Well, the pay is good. [Laughs]. It's kept the kids in braces at least. And, you know, I help people.

Counsellor: I noticed some hesitation when you said that. What are you feeling right now?

Client: I dunno. [pause] Well, I suppose I feel a little sad…

Counsellor: Where in your body are feeling that?

Client: In my chest. I don't know why. Like I say, the job has been pretty secure and I've been OK with it.

Counsellor: [noticing a lowered and slower cadence in the client's voice]: If you don't mind me making this observation but I get the impression what your heart is telling you doesn't match what your mouth is saying. Am I wrong about that?

Client: No, you're right. I just can't afford to dwell on things too much. If I thought about all my regrets I'd never be able to get anything done.

Counsellor: What kind of emotions are you feeling right now as you say that?

5.5.4. Acceptance

Acceptance, which could perhaps be more accurately described as willingness, is a process that counters our tendencies to try to control inner experiences (Hayes et al., 1999). It is indeed common experience, supported by research, that trying to avoid, control, stuff, ignore, or repress what we perceive to be negative emotions is virtually impossible and, in fact, only perpetuates them (Wegner & Zanakos, 1994). According to ACT theory, our attempts at controlling and escaping from unwanted thoughts and feelings, otherwise known as experiential avoidance, results in strategies that have more negative impact than allowing the original experience to be felt (Luoma et al., 2007). Control strategies often lead to 'stuck' cycles where the person's life becomes about managing their internal experience, and which ultimately leads to a life lacking in vitality (Polk, 2014). For example, I have met many clients who control their social anxiety by staying home. Their anxiety does indeed go down in the short term, but it comes back and in the meantime their control efforts have robbed them of the opportunity to participate in the kind of life they desire. As a result, their life interests diminish as their life increasingly becomes more about controlling their fears.

There are four general reasons why we think control might work to mitigate unwanted emotions. The first is that it seems to work so well in the outer world. The second is that we are often given cultural cues that it is possible to control emotion. For example, we are often asked to not be afraid, or to stop crying. Third, as children we

observe that the adults around us always seem able to control emotion, since their avoidance strategies (like, for example, using drugs or alcohol) are often deliberately hidden from us. Lastly, we have been able at times to calm ourselves down through breathing or some other technique, at least for a while (Hayes et al., 1999). As adults, we often come to realize, perhaps not soon enough, that our control strategies for getting rid of inner experience generally do not work. Willingness is the alternative choice we can make to open up to all the experiences of life, good and bad, and to decide to move in valued directions, even in the presence of unwanted thoughts and feelings.

The control agenda is oftentimes extended to other people. In order to avoid anxious thoughts and feelings, we often attempt to make others behave in the way we want them to, and we become annoyed when they do not (Eifert, McKay, & Forsyth, 2006). These often subtle, but also often grossly overt, attempts to control other people's behaviour are really avoidant means to mitigate our own unwanted thoughts and feelings.

In terms of our present discussion, control of both our inner experience and of others are representative of cultural disciplinary expectations in the interests of the consumerist neoliberal agenda. These practices are very often found within helping professions like counselling where emotions are categorized and disciplined under the supervision of the expert clinician. Willingness, practiced by both the helper and the person in session, can function as a model for sharing power, thus exemplifying equality and respect. Sharing power, from this perspective, means that counsellors need to become aware on an ongoing basis that the helping interaction itself contains power differentials and that there is always the possibility of abuse. Consequently, a counsellor's willingness to acknowledge difficult thoughts and feelings around the expert position and give up the need to control the person is a particularly useful process to embody within the counselling session, and can provide a radical re-imagining of the power relations between people. This principle invites consensual decision making and the acknowledgement that the therapist is not an expert in the person's life but another source of perspective and encouragement informed by wisdom and experience. The therapist is positioned as a co-learner, renouncing the idea that the they are some sort of emancipator who deigns to share expert knowledge (Goodman et al., 2004). In many ways the therapist/client relationship is like a shared journey toward the client's

destination, during which the person determines the level of co-operation and readiness for change, while the counsellor asks appropriate questions that guide the person in the direction they wish to go (Lipchik, 2002). This quality of interpersonal interaction becomes a model for the democratic societies both counsellor and client hope to build.

By abandoning the idea of the ‘expert’ and by walking beside the client rather than leading, the counsellor is able to model co-operation, relationship, and some level of equality and empowerment during the therapy session. This is in contrast to more disease-model or individualistic approaches which empower the therapist as expert, disseminating their expert knowledge to the masses. That ‘client-as-broken’ models reflect the class division of our society is no accident. Again, these approaches substantiate and actively promote the capitalist status quo by reproducing unequal power relations within the therapy setting (Proctor, 2008; Rossiter, 2000). In the case of a worker, for example, the capitalist ideology is reified as the essence of the employee, manifesting as psychological qualities like ‘agreeableness’, ‘conscientiousness’, or ‘resilience’. When these, and other such, attributes, are seen to be lacking, it is a depoliticised psychology’s function to blame the individual, force them to passively consume psychological truths, and divert attention away from the real source of lack of conformity to norms which is the system itself (Roberts, 2015).

Sharing power must become a necessary principle to combat, and to dismantle, albeit within the limited confines of a 50-minute counselling session, the inequality and elitism of the counselling therapeutic relationship (Smail, 1995), thereby providing a model of possibilities for change within the socio-political life of the person. Willingness, or acceptance, is a useful process to assist the person to allow unwanted thoughts and feelings into their experience without avoidance, and to minimize the desire to control others. Furthermore, when practiced by the counsellor, it allows for improved helping relationships based on equality and respect.

The following vignette demonstrates a person’s control agenda around anxiety. She is treating it as the enemy, something that she needs to push down. The therapist instead invites it in, expressing their own anxiety to the client, and begins to encourage the client to engage with their goals. This demonstrates that both client and counsellor are human beings each moving toward what matters to them, even in the presence of an unwanted emotion which is not only fully accepted as part of their mutual journeys, but

considered as a potent source of information for their lives. The alienation between reason and emotion, ordinarily perpetuated by the emotional disciplinary mores of our society, is thereby healed.

Client: I'm feeling pretty anxious about the whole situation at work. The bosses don't like any talk of unionizing. I keep a straight face but inside I'm really worried. I can't get rid of it.

Counsellor: How does your anxiety show up?

[Client spends some time describing her thoughts and feelings]

Counsellor: What do you think your anxiety is saying to you? I mean if it had a message, what would it be?

Client: I don't know. Maybe to forget about making waves. Just settle down and just be thankful we all have jobs right now.

Counsellor: Could be. What if you're anxiety was telling you that you're doing something worthwhile, that its about time the employees stood up for themselves? It's uncertain, sure, but it's something important and worth doing.

Client: I suppose so. Still, I don't like the feeling. I'd rather feel a lot of courage [laughs].

Counsellor: Maybe your anxiety is the price for doing something that matters. I mean I feel anxious when you describe what's going on and what everyone is thinking of doing. Can we let that anxiety in the room and figure out a way forward?

5.5.5. Committed Action

Committed action means establishing ongoing patterns of behavior in line with a person's values or what matters to them in their lives (Hayes et al., 1999). Commitment is concerned with creating a new life, one that is in the service of how the person would like to be in the world. In many ways, commitment requires a focus on the abilities and

strengths of the person which may have heretofore been hidden. A person's strengths are very often obscured for different reasons, and, in terms of this discussion, subjugated by systemic oppression. A focus on strengths at the broader systemic level means tapping into abilities and resources that the person or community have already used, or has the potential of using in the future, to accomplish social justice values. Clients and communities must be encouraged by counsellors to remember, bring prominence to, and then accentuate, those abilities which they have found to have worked in their lives in the past. This might be in relation to systemic ideological change they may have had, or currently do have, experiences of democratic decision making, of fair and just practices that work in favour of all participants, of instances of refusal, dissention, opposition, or of protest that have changed events in their lives for the better of all concerned, and so on. These events can be highlighted in sessions, with the counsellor asking questions of the person that bring attention to those positive qualities within themselves that made opposition to injustice possible. The process of shining light on such instances assists in strengthening perhaps forgotten skills and abilities, and inspires a determination to push forward even in the face of difficulties and barriers. Counselling psychologists may help clients struggling with so-called negative thoughts and feelings which may come up as they fight for fairness and equality in their lives. They may give new perspectives on emotions like anger or anxiety, normalizing these as expected human reactions to unfair conditions. Similarly, the stresses that people feel as they work to meet societal expectations around making money, and consuming goods and services, can be re-framed in light of an awareness of a commodity fetishism that fosters the destruction of relationship and real human connection in their lives.

It is in the realm of committed action that justice ideals are realized in practice. Individual counselling that normally involves individual commitments to personally valued goals can easily begin to be generalized more broadly to workplace settings and to the amelioration of alienating conditions. Within workplaces workers may start to organize and take steps towards the democratization of the workplace (Wolff, 2012). At the same time, counselling psychologists are well-placed to engage in advocacy, outreach, prevention programs, and psychoeducational interventions (Vera & Spreight, 2004), alternative helping roles, out-of-office interventions (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014), and other non-traditional ways of enacting social justice (Kiselica, 2004; Koch & Juntunen, 2014). Counsellors could be active, for example, in supporting, advocating for, and participating

in organizing collective action by not only providing psychosocial supports but by assisting in arranging for other supports, perhaps using media like the internet, television, or newspapers to promote the cause (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

The following vignette focuses mainly on the importance of de-emphasizing perfection as a goal and instead embracing mistakes and shortcomings as necessary ingredients for attaining valued ends. Ideas of perfection not only sustain empty consumerist standards for living, along with their messages of unworthiness, but they inevitably interfere with change, impeding progress toward social justice goals.

Client: I just give up after a while. You know, I get distracted by other things. I've been try my hardest to get ahead with my art, but I it seems like there is so many barriers that get in my way. No-one seems to appreciate what I do. Maybe my stuff is garbage.

Counsellor: That's an interesting thought your mind is giving you...can you acknowledge it, thank your mind for it, and move on.

Client: Yes. I've been doing all that. Still, I can't get it right. I want it to be perfect, for everything to go smoothly like in the movies or something.

Counsellor: Perfection. That's another interesting thought your mind is giving you. We were talking about commitment...is perfection part of that?

Client: Yes, if you're committed then things should turn out perfectly.

Counsellor: What if the commitment is simply to get back on the horse again every time you fall off? And, as you know well now, you will fall off. So what?

Client: I want to get it perfect though, just like a Michael Jordan or someone like that, except in the world of art.

Counsellor: That's a nice example...how many hundreds of times did Michael Jordan fail to sink his most famous shots before he was able to do it

perfectly, as you put it?

Client: Probably many hundreds.

Counsellor: Right. Commitment isn't about perfection, it's about staying true to what matters to you and pushing on, with all the successes and failures.

5.5.6. Values

In ACT values are defined as verbally constructed, global, desired, and chosen life directions (Luoma et al., 2007). They are the qualitative dimension to what we do in life; we may value engaging in relationships with respect and kindness, for example, or interacting with friends in a caring way, or being a dependable and conscientious employee. Values tend to be verbs rather than nouns and, in contrast to goals which have a beginning and an ending, values are usually life-long qualities of the heart. Interestingly, it is often within our anxieties and fears that values can be found. A client I worked with had an intense social anxiety. They did not want to go out and refused invitations in order to avoid their fears. At first glance, it seemed that they were just incredibly anti-social, but, after some conversation, it became clear that they longed for connection with others and meaningful relationships. Their anxiety was exactly about their value of being in community with others. Similarly, I have had many conversations with men who struggle with anger and who discover that their anger is an expression of their sense of injustice, and their desire to make things right. In ACT values are the guiding principle for all the other processes; thus, we do not simply accept unwanted thoughts and feelings for their own sake, or abide in the present moment as an end in itself. Rather, these processes are enacted in order to connect with our values and to move forward purposefully into our lives. Here again is a representation within the practice itself of the dual aspect nature of reality I have proposed in this dissertation. There is an equal emphasis on engaging with one's conscious center to connect with values while, at the same time, moving out from there into the world to effect change. This is why the six ACT processes are often described as mindfulness and acceptance processes, and commitment and behaviour change processes (Luoma et al., 2007). When people are engaged with their values, their lives tend to feel more vital, alive, and meaningful. Engaging with values means connecting with the intrinsic conscious nature of the self.

As mentioned previously, all the ACT processes are inter-connected (Hayes et al., 1999). As a client (and the counsellor too for that matter) engages with self-as-context, or what I have called consciousness, they are well placed to choose valued ways of being in the world that matter to them. An experiential understanding of the centrality of consciousness naturally produces valued ways of living, unencumbered by conceptualized narratives of the self which are so often connected to limitation and avoidance. Furthermore, even although values are personal and should be freely chosen by an individual, it has been my experience that peoples' values are, ultimately, some expression of the desire for love, which is the grounding for the expression of the equality/fairness, democracy/freedom, and community/solidarity espoused by Wright (2019) as the core values of a social justice oriented perspective. From love comes a sense of justice and, in terms of this discussion, it is as people engage fully with their values within an individual therapy session that they begin to have a taste of the possibilities of the establishment of justice and democracy in the outer world, and, specifically, in the workplace.

The following conversation focuses on exploring client values. Often the values of the neoliberal culture are expressed in session, a manifestation of the commodified empty self that has internalized society's ideological structures. Yet, because the false empty self is a mere reflection of the intrinsic self of consciousness, the conversation involves a 'digging down' to unearth the inevitably familiar fundamental values that we all share as human beings, and which constitute the basis for the good life. Alienation from oneself is overcome as we begin to engage with what matters to us, thereby engaging with others and the world in a more authentic and compassionate fashion.

Counsellor: I mean, what is it that you really want from going in to work day after day?

Client: One word…money. I want as much money as I can make.

Counsellor: What would you do with all that money?

Client: I'd buy all the nice things I've always wanted...a nice car, a house, good clothes, all the things I never had when I was growing up.

Counsellor: Why is having those things important to you?

Client: Because then I'd have some security for my family and, I suppose, a

sense of being grounded and at home.

Counsellor: Any why is that important? What is it about feeling secure and grounded that is desirable?

Client: I'd feel like I was showing love to my wife and kids and I'd have a sense of peace in the security, a sense of connection.

Counsellor: So, if we really scratch the surface of your workaholism, it's really all about love and peace.

Client: Yeah, I guess so...at the end of the day, yes, it's about connecting to the people I love.

5.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate ways in which the micro-levels of counselling normally conceived, can be viewed as practices that work on the macro-level of systematic change. Emphasizing three themes explored in this dissertation - the distortion of genuine relationship within capitalist society into relationships based on commodity fetishism and capital accumulation; the ubiquity of consciousness as a source of an ethic of value and therefore of justice, with the centrality of consciousness as the intrinsic nature of human beings; and the philosophical notion of an enminded universe, with the part being fully present in the whole just as the whole is fully present in the part - I argued that therapy may be able to liberate itself from the capitalist ideology within which it has grown, and indeed provide emancipatory practices for both counsellors and their clients. I used Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT, as an example of a therapy approach that can easily be used to pursue these ends. Although it is difficult to give a comprehensive account of how the ACT processes work within an actual session, I outlined each of the processes and gave some short examples of how conversations might proceed while focused on each of them. This is not to say, of course, that ACT is the only therapy that could be used to effect broader systemic change. Many of the newer mindfulness-based therapies and, indeed, some of the older therapies like Jungian approaches which theorize expansive conceptions of consciousness, could similarly be used (Whitney, 2018).

My contention is not that a therapy session must always involve conversations connected with the broad systemic causes of a client distress, nor must they always lead to the status of the person in the workplace. People seek help for all sorts of reasons and the counsellor must follow the client's lead. However, I do say that the workplace cannot be neglected as a possible site for the exploration of a theory of a case, and that even if it is not directly connected to the predominant presenting issue, the socio-economic, educational, and ideological histories of the person's experience, so aligned as they are within our current society toward the production of obedient workers, must be accentuated when engaged in conversations with people.

Those in the environmental movement are sometimes asked how it is that they drive in their gas-powered vehicles to a march protesting the oil industry. It was the same objection raised against those who opposed the slave trade for wearing clothes made by slaves. Persons who take a stand against any harmful practice within a society are usually also participants within the systems they want to change. They are well aware of the fact that they too are complicit; but whereas others give up and accept the status quo, some individuals accept the reality of their current situation, knowing it is not ideal, and push ahead to effect change. The helping professional works within a system that is unequal and often unjust. It is certainly not democratic. The result is that the helper is often involved with practices that seem to perpetuate the very inequities that they are trying to oppose. As I have described, their very methods may have been born, developed, and shaped within those unsatisfactory social conditions. Yet, helpers cannot abandon helping; they can only recognize the problems, remain clear-eyed, and do the best they can to make a difference, always with an aspiration to change larger, unequal systems like capitalism. Consequently, their practices may be messy and appear inconsistent, perhaps even hypocritical to those looking from the outside. Indeed, therapy will undoubtedly look completely different in major respects in a post-capitalist world. In the meantime, much like the bodhisattvas of Buddhism, social justice oriented helpers must continue to act, grounded in the present moment, and work without attachment to results, which are sure to arrive in due course.

Epilogue

I write this epilogue, in May of 2020, at the time of the global COVID-19 pandemic which to date has caused thousands of deaths in North America and around the world, made hundreds of thousands more sick to varying degrees, while rupturing economies, and drastically changing the way we live our lives on multiple levels. It currently remains to be seen what will happen in the future and whether some or all of the impacts that societies are experiencing will forever become, to some extent or another, permanent features of people's lives. Despite the refrain that 'we are all in this together,' it is undeniable that the impact of the pandemic has had varying impacts in the lives of people depending on their class position. In particular, this crisis has revealed in readily apparent ways the foundational role and value of work within modern society, while exposing the imbalances in the way in which some forms of work are valued over others. At least in some quarters, there has been a clear recognition of the importance to society of those who provide not only essential health services but also the basic necessities of life - store workers, postal workers, truck drivers, farmers, cleaners, small business owners of all kinds, and so on - many of whom have contributed to society in ways that have heretofore been underappreciated or completely ignored. A substantial number of these occupations have been historically performed for poor wages, little or no benefits, no protections, or under precarious conditions, and much of it by marginalized groups of people. In many ways, the current pandemic has, even if temporarily, exposed the inequalities and distortions of capitalist systems. Some of the very same workers who are working in occupations that provide essential services are also those more likely to contract and die from COVID-19 due to the precarity of their working conditions, the inability to access care, and their level of income. Minorities have been particularly affected. In England and Wales, it was reported by the Office for National Statistics that the death rates in the poorest areas of those countries were double that of more affluent areas.[55]

Our current society values work based on market demands and the flow of capital accumulation, with no real consideration of the important significance of social contribution. It is revealing that in the United States there are record unemployment

[55] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/01/covid-19-deaths-twice-as-high-in-poorest-areas-in-england-and-wales

numbers due to the pandemic's devastation to the economy, unequaled since the Great Depression, and yet the stock markets are performing very well. A crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the impoverishment of a market system which valorizes occupations involved with the flow of monopoly-finance capital, most of which involves nothing more than moving money and paper, creating 'negative externalities', the costs of which are transposed onto the society itself, while at the same time revealing the indispensable value of service-oriented work that contributes to the material needs of society. Such work creates and sustains 'positive externalities' since not only is it itself beneficial to society, but it also derivatively creates the spaces, conditions, and atmospheres within the public sphere where people meet, are entertained, or play, thus nurturing the psychological, cultural, and spiritual terrain of our lives (Herzog, 2020).

I have argued in this dissertation that it is the way our society arranges our engagement with nature through work that causes alienation and the inevitable mental health issues that follow. This can be conceived as a dual matter of production and consumption, with the problem and the remedy found within the assumptions of both domains. On the one hand, as crises like the current pandemic continue to highlight the failures of capitalism within the economic, ecological, epidemiological, and public health spheres, the systemic inequalities within modes of production within our work arrangements, based on divisions between those who live off wealth and those who live off work (Blakely, 2019), have exposed the ways in which our societies are fundamentally undemocratic and unjust. On the other hand, we are educated and socialized to believe the illusion that the personal consumption and accumulation of ever more products, most of them unnecessary to living a fulfilling life, is the way to move successfully and happily through this world. In contrast to these ways of being, I have suggested that democratization of workplaces, whereby workers have control of their labour, benefiting themselves and their communities, and a panpsychic vision of the world, wherein consciousness is found to be ubiquitous, creating an inter-related partnership of the human and non-human worlds, with corresponding values and purpose based on real relational needs, are both required to radically and effectively transform our notions of production and consumption.

The helping professions have a large role to play in this transition. For just as our present systems of production and consumption are based on a philosophical foundation built on a de-spirited and materialistic individualism, along with a profound greed, which

in turn is based on a deep fear - a fear borne from a feeling of separation and disconnection - helping professions like counselling psychology can potentially introduce people to new ways of being that assists in re-establishing genuine relationship and authentic community. This is a process of education, not in the sense of imparting new knowledge to others, but in the sense of assisting them to re-discover parts of themselves that have been obscured by the ideology of contemporary capitalist society. Education from this perspective is a radical act of personal and societal transformation which grounds itself in contemporaneous realities that serve to challenge the philosophical and ideological systems upon which our society is based. Where, then, does such an educational project ground itself, and is it relevant to the education of those in helping professions?

In a chapter entitled, 'Five Basic Orientations to the Curriculum,' Elliot Eisner (1985) suggested five ways in which curriculum might be thought of within educational institutions: the development of cognitive processes; academic rationalism; personal relevance; social adaption and social reconstruction; and curriculum as technology. He is careful to provide the proviso that each of these categories are not pure descriptions, and are certainly removed from their situational contexts, but that in specific educational settings one of the orientations usually takes precedence over the others. Thus, although these classifications are really primarily foci for analytic purposes, he is clear that context matters and that "different contexts may justify emphasis on different orientations" (p. 85). As I read through his article and his analysis, I felt a connection to many of the issues and proposals indicated in each of the orientations. It becomes an interesting form of self-reflection to consider how each of the curriculum forms have played out in one's own educational experience, with the recognition that some of the orientations, while seeming so obvious and important on paper, had no practicable bearing on one's life course in retrospect, whereas other perspectives, perhaps initially seeming tenuous, would perhaps have made all the difference in the world to one's life trajectory had they been emphasized. Generally, the fulfillment of economic imperatives always seemed to displace social and planetary concerns.

I have argued that Marx's understanding of alienation from labour is intimately linked to the alienation of human beings from nature, and that both alienations are contextually shaped by the current capitalist system within which we are educated and live (Foster, 2000). Our alienation from nature, manifested through capitalist workplace

practices, has now led to the threat of a global climate crisis which, if it hasn't done so already, will soon impact every level of human and non-human activity on the planet. It is beyond the purview of this dissertation to examine the impacts of global warming, except to say that it is already having massive impacts on developing countries, marginalized populations, women, children, and the poor.[56] In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a report on the potential impacts of a rise in global temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius or more, with the authors concluding that global carbon dioxide emissions must be curbed well before 2030 to avoid the most severe consequences of global warming.[57] These will include massive poverty and inequality as human and natural systems break down; however, unless there are almost immediate socio-economic changes, it is apparent that by current projections proposed carbon emission targets will not be met.[58] Clearly, multiple systemic breakdowns will have extremely adverse consequences for human health, both physical and mental, and its increasing probability demands a response from a social justice perspective.

Thus, if Eisner's categories were to be listed in terms of pedagogical imperative, I would suggest that, given the impending reality of the utter devastation to the planet by climate change caused by human beings living their lives under capitalist systems, his category of 'social reconstruction' should be the pre-eminent contextual academic framework adopted by educational institutions in these current times.[59] Eisner (1985) defines this approach as

> basically aimed at developing levels of critical consciousness among children and youth so that they become aware of the kinds of ills that the society has and become motivated to learn how to alleviate them. Programs having this orientation will frequently focus on controversial issues, what some writers in the social studies have called the closed areas

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[56] This article from *The Guardian* reveals just one example of the intersectionality between climate change and mental health issues: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jul/23/rising-temperatures-linked-to-increased-suicide-rates

[57] See Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2018). Summary for policymakers. In V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, H. O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P. R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J. B. R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M. I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, & T. Waterfield (Eds.), *Global warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*. World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. Retrieved from https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_SPM_version_report_HR.pdf

[58] For example, the *2019 G20 Brown to Green Report* indicates that not only did Canada's emissions increase by 17% between 1990 and 2016, but that it will currently not meet its 2050 goal of 80% emissions reduction from 2005 levels. See: https://www.climate-transparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Brown-to-Green-Report-2019.pdf

[59] This article from *The Guardian* describes Italy's adoption of compulsory education in the effects of climate change on the planet, with subjects taught from the perspective of sustainability: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/nov/06/italy-to-school-students-in-sustainability-and-climate-crisis

> of society: religious values, sexual preferences, political corruption, race prejudice, and the like. The aim of such programs is not primarily to help students adapt to a society that is in need of fundamental change but rather to help them to recognize the real problems and do something about them. (p. 76)

A social reconstruction approach to curriculum, focused around a perspective that advocates for planetary sustainability, would invite a complete challenge to the prevailing socio-economic culture since the climate crisis has been generated by a capitalist system and a neoliberal philosophy that has had no consideration for the life of the planet.

Our current climate predicament has not arrived within an ahistorical bubble. It is not primarily due to human nature's proclivity toward 'greed', an explanation that tends to atomize the problem within individuals and which can serve to obscure the movement of ideological power, but is directly related instead to current relations of production, namely, a rapacious capitalism, with the culture surrounding and sustaining it. Malm (2018) correctly points out that "the rise of large-scale fossil fuel combustion has not occurred in the sphere of play, sex, sleep, leisure, philosophical contemplation or aesthetic appreciation but precisely, and evidently, in that of labour" (Chapter 5, para. 8). It is social property relations, relations reproduced between human beings, and the ideologies that underwrite them, that determine the manner in which humans interact with the rest of nature.

The destruction of the earth for the profit of a few is a consequence of our current social and economic systems. The inevitability of this destruction is considered a mere externality in the drive to increase profits and personal wealth for a relatively few individuals. The failure of governments and business to act to reverse the huge costs that will be paid by the planet and its inhabitants reflects an intransigence linked to maintaining the status quo. Moreover, the changes that are required to avoid disaster cannot merely be in the form of solutionism, an adjusting of the current system, as in, for example, an increase in regulation, more environmental legislation, or the introduction of carbon taxes. Since we are now experiencing systemic failure on a planetary scale it is vital that there must be a radical re-organization of our political and economic systems to address the challenge. Such changes have been advocated by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the United States, for example, through a Green New Deal, but it remains to be

seen if these suggestions, even if implemented today, would be enough to avert disaster (Blakley, 2019).

The idea that education and the helping professions should constitute themselves within a framework that prioritizes planetary sustainability over capitalist accumulation may initially appear far-fetched. Yet already the climate crisis has substantially impacted multiple areas of human and non-human activity around the world, and is having noticeable impacts on human health, and notably mental health (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018; Fritze, Blashki, Burke, & Wiseman, 2008; Page & Howard, 2010). Education functions as a means to change socio-cultural practices for the benefit of all. But educational pedagogy is not apolitical; as with counselling psychology, education is very much associated with the movement and generation of capital, and its practices support it. An educational curriculum rooted within the social reconstructionism that Eisner outlines would prioritize the planet itself as a basis for knowledge acquisition and societal change. This requires the centering of social justice and democracy as essential requirements in education in general, but particularly for those training within the helping professions.

As we have seen counselling psychologists have struggled with how to approach the issue of social justice. They have generally settled on multiculturalism as a foundation for engaging with social justice practices, with educational practices following accordingly. Nevertheless, there have been voices calling for a wider conceptual understanding of what social justice might look like in connection with counselling, even within the framework of the multicultural approach. In light of the current crises in the world, it seems clear that we must go beyond multiculturalism and consider something altogether different (Palmer and Parish, 2004).

I have proposed in this work that we do indeed need something altogether different: we require a return to an unalienated connection with nature. This involves a recognition of consciousness within nature, along with the ethical imperatives which accompany such a shift, and a concurrent transformation of our politics. There has been no substantive debate within counsellor educational circles around the issue of relations of production as a generator of alienation amongst working people, and as a source of mental health issues, or a critique of capitalist class politics, economics, and social systems as directly responsible for the phenomenon of climate change, another

intersectional source of all manner of physical and mental suffering. These are the issues with which counselling has an obligation to engage if it is truly serious about committing to social justice within its practices. They are also the essential issues that would frame a radical social reconstructionist approach to education.

There is much agreement among those who advocate for the implementation of social justice concerns within the profession of counselling psychology that an effective education of graduate level counsellors is essential (Baluch et al., 2004; Collins & Arthur, 2010; Constantine et al., 2007; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015; Goodman et al., 2004; Palmer & Parish, 2008; Koch & Juntunen, 2014; McMahon, Arthur, & Collins, 2008; Vera & Speight, 2003; Young & Lalande, 2011). Clearly, ongoing work, research, and participation should continue to be carried on within the realms of the micro-levels of individual practices and in the meso-levels of community and organization (Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011; Motulsky, Gere, Saleem, & Trantham, 2014). Here, there must be a primary emphasis within counselling educational institutions on the development of courses that cover psychology's history of scientific racism; antiracism education to oppose White nationalism and racism; cross-cultural competency training; interdisciplinary studies with a focus on public policy, public health, anthropology, history, and ethnic, gender, religious, and sexual orientation studies; historical perspectives on the profession's identity (Baluch et al., 2004); offerings of real world experiential opportunities in courses and for internships like service-learning training programs (i.e. working with educational, legal, and public policy institutions); working in social justice training settings that support less traditional helping roles; emphasizing more preventative interventions (Ali, Liu, Mahmood, & Arguello, 2008; Constantine et al., 2007); and partnering with activist organizations or community organizations that specialize in serving marginalized populations (Ali & Sichel, 2014).

On a personal level, educators must act as role models to students, striving to incorporate multiple sources into their teaching; being willing to have uncomfortable conversations with colleagues; be prepared to take public positions and to show up on the front lines (Arredondo & Perez, 2003); establish an ongoing reflective practice (Ancis & Ali, 2005; Brady-Amoon, Makhija, Dixit, & Dator, 2012) and involve themselves in advocacy and activism (Chang et al., 2010). In the last chapter of this dissertation, I proposed that therapies like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy may offer processes that can affect the macro-levels of system change while working with clients on a one-to-

one basis. ACT's processes can simultaneously develop an appreciation of the intrinsic reality of consciousness, along with the development of values, and at the same time encourage the creation of societies that truly honour social justice.

The issue of changing climate on this planet invites the opportunity to position ourselves, as educators, whether of counselling psychology students or students in other helping disciplines, at the forefront of engaging with social justice issues at the macro-level. The threat of the very existence of the planet, and the life that it generates, provides a touchstone for considering and, hopefully, realizing new ways of being together. I have argued in this dissertation that radical change will involve a simultaneous looking outwardly at the economic and social systems in which we are embedded, and inwardly at the consciousness which is at the heart of all. Both ways of looking are required. Educators are truly in a consequential position to critique our current systems and to offer new ways of seeing the world, a world that is experienced as alive, vital, meaningful, and conscious.

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